

31761 065684359

MORTING RECOLLECTIONS
OF AN OLD 'UN



FRANK N. STREATFEILD
C. M. G.



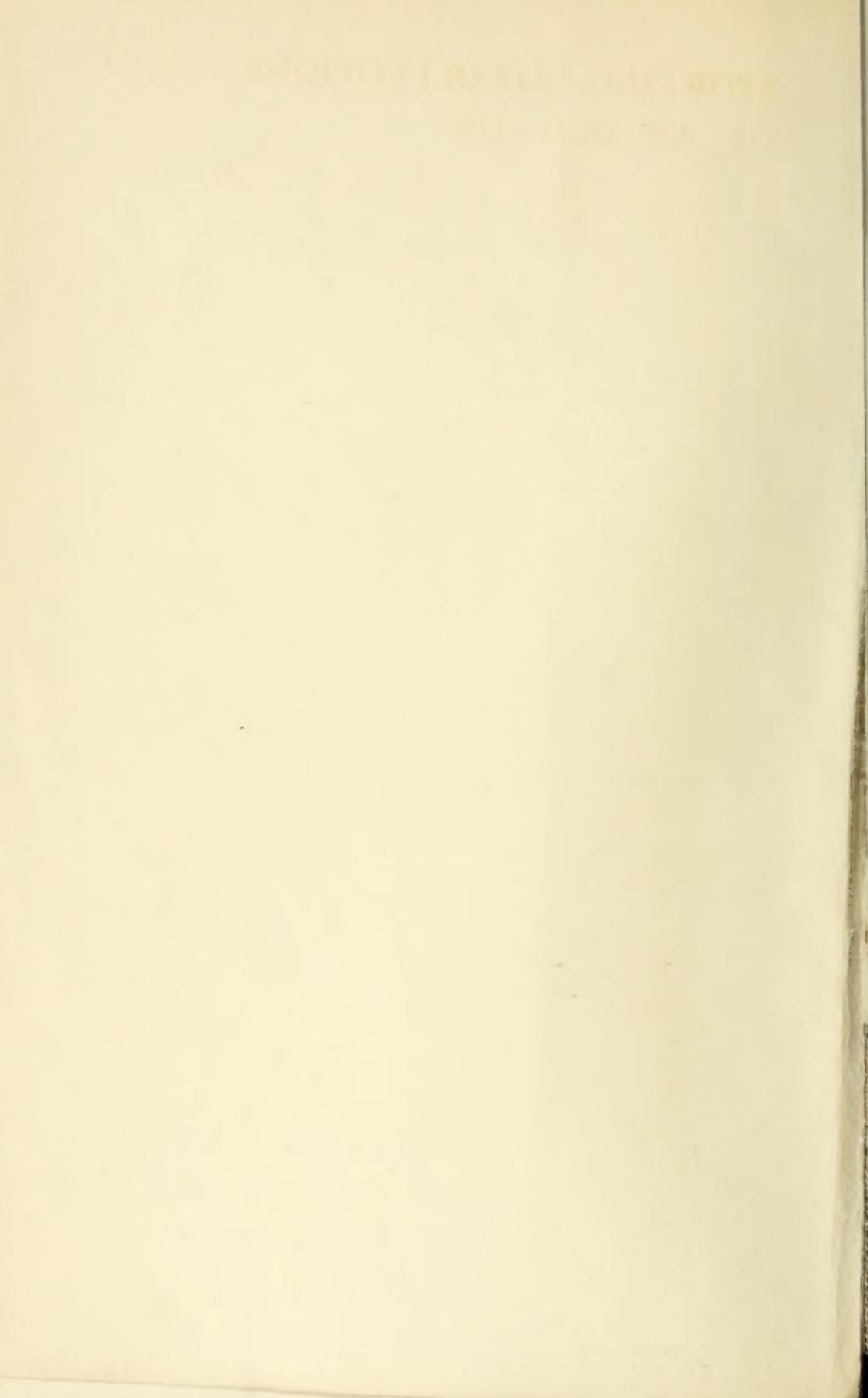
Presented to the

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY

by the

ONTARIO LEGISLATIVE
LIBRARY

1980



SPORTING RECOLLECTIONS
OF AN OLD 'UN



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Toronto



From a photo by Miss Evelyn Streatfeild.]

“THE OLD ‘UN’ AND “WALLER”; THE TWO WORST
POACHERS IN WEST KENT

31926

SPORTING
RECOLLECTIONS
OF AN OLD 'UN



Brog.

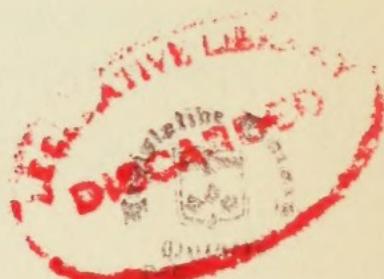
S.

(Streatfeild)

BY

FRANK N. STREATFEILD, C.M.G.

Author of "Reminiscences of an Old 'Un," etc., etc.



LONDON
EVELEIGH NASH
1913

brief
GV
0004736

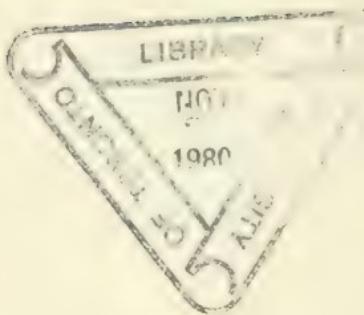
GV

PREFACE

I HATE prefaces. Nevertheless I should be sadly lacking in both gratitude and good manners were I to neglect to emphasize most warmly the exceeding courtesy and kindness I have received from my friends Mr. Cook, the editor of *The Field*, and Mr. Huskinson, the editor of *The Tatler*, who have graciously permitted me to reproduce in this volume a few things that have already appeared in their well-known and widely read pages.

F. N. S.

*Hever Cottage, Edenbridge,
January 1913.*



CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Return to England after ten years' absence in South Africa—
Gun, cricket-bat and fishing-rod come readily to hand—
Shooting—Its social aspect—What Archie Stuart Wortley has to say about it—A dose for the liver in the silent watches of the night—Royalty expected but didn't come: result—Comic aspect of shooting—*Aldeborontiphoscophornio and his master*—Where does the fun come in for those who miss nineteen shots out of every twenty?—Greedy shots—Now that is as it should be—Roosevelt as a big-game hunter—Grouse driving 1, partridge driving 2, covert shooting 3, rough winter shooting 4, also ran, shooting outsides in October—Swaledale, farewell !

PAGE

i

'CHAPTER II

Easy grouse driving at Pitsford—Partridge driving—A good day's walk over a shot-out beat—Two invitations for partridge driving—Lunch at one of 'em—Driving in West Kent—Typical day at the end of the season—"Come out, you little beggar, and join in the sport"—Walking up partridges—A good but solitary day in the Holmesdale Valley—Count de Baillet and some '84 Ayala.

32

CHAPTER III

Grouse shooting over dogs—The Cuchullins in the distance—The "Dragooner," the writer and a keeper—Five guns to one dog, the best sprinter annexes the shooting—Bob and shove-halfpenny—Folk who count their shots, kills and misses, how do they do it?—A rough shooting—in the old *Clansman* to Ardlussa—A month in Jura—Woodcocks—A yeld hind—O Lord! two yeld hinds!—Curtain—Deerhounds, Cavack—A magnificent chase in Jura

57

vii

Contents

CHAPTER IV

My host and nephew "S—M"—Oransay—Shooting of the most varied description in Colonsay and Oransay—"Waller!" God bless his brown eyes and black curly coat—A trifle of an upset at the edge of "the strand" one evening—Archie appears nervous on wheels and also a little later on in a boat—Oransay Priory and St. Columba—The McNeills—The mermaids of Oransay, otherwise seals—Dhu Heartach lighthouse—A very narrow shave for a shipwreck on Eilan-nau-Rou—Everlasting wind—A sorrowful upset thereby—S—M's crowners, *i.e.* Some of 'em—Hangman's Hill and its ancient rocky gallows.

PAGE

77

CHAPTER V

Shooting in distant lands—Ignorance of the ordinary colonist as to sport and natural history—Guinea-fowl—Spiny-tailed ducks—Madagascar goose—Sand-grouse and their habits—Snipe the "Spookbird"—A day after snipe at Noneye's Vley—Another Mistress Gilpin of frugal mind—Quail—A very long and tough journey by a man, and the Lord was on his side—Another by a woman when He wasn't—East London in Cape Colony—And a little description of a sleeping chamber for a lady

105

CHAPTER VI

Cricket—My first match—Poor "Snivvy," in other words Edward McNiven—Alfred Lubbock—one Jumbo—Neville Lubbock and Fred Norman, point and lob bowler—The village grocer and six bottles of "fizz"—The cricket company—Old Samuel Gurney the Quaker—The "Butterflies" at The Mote, and an umpire—A bellyful of bowling at Rickling Green and H. E. Bull, *a Harlequin*, plays for the Quidnuncs and scores over a hundred—The Authentics at The King's Arms, Westerham—The Old 'Un's week—a Streatfeild eleven—Dear lovely Pusey—Kent cricket in olden days

128

Contents

CHAPTER VII

Back to South Africa again—Bechuanaland—Evil times, and no residence of any sort—Cornwallis Harris's picture of the high-road to Kuruman—Red tape, plenty of it—A medical examination, and an old fossil says I am not sound. Lor!—A little game of golf—A candid opinion of a good many Government officials whose only occupation at that time consisted in licking the boots of that great and good man, Cecil Rhodes—A description of a frontier officer as he should *not* be—Keeping up the dignity of Government out of the taxpayers' pocket—Government servants in Downing Street and abroad!—Methods of justice and decency in Bechuanaland—A murder case of a very brutal description, murderer let off by the all-pervading red tape—Bechuanaland Border Police a disgrace to civilization, officers worse than the troopers—Injustice to good men in the past, Byng, Bartle Frere, Chinese Gordon, Butler, Archer Shee, James Outram, Hammersley and dozens of others—A little geology to finish up with—The Kuruman caves—A terrified land surveyor—The story of the puff-adder, by the kind permission of Mr. Theodore A. Cook, the editor of *The Field*. 163

CHAPTER VIII

Fishing, lots of it—My Welsh tutor, his headers which were not *headers*, quite the reverse!—The Darent—My first trout—The wrath of the Squire—Tarred roads and consequently dead trout—Squerryes—General Wolfe—Lullingstone—Sunset in Glendarent—Schwalbach—The Neckar—A day and not a wedding-day at Gretna—Tickling trout—Snatching carp—Some other dastardly methods of catching fish—Gaffing General Sir Redvers Buller from the depths of the Shin—Hopes of finding a drowned home-ruler, but no luck—Poaching and yet more poaching 236

CHAPTER IX

South Hampshire chalk streams, but more especially the Test—One John and his little ways—A drive with John—A sail with John—John's breeches—Punt gunning with John, not if I know it—God bless his

Contents

	PAGE
lordship's steam launch—Memories of the past in South Hampshire—More Test—Poor dry-fly men can't catch trout unless they see them " <i>splashing about</i> "—General Blowhard, (1) as a fisherman, (2) as a puntman, (3) as a liar, but the greatest of these is Number 3—Some whackers of the Test—Three lambs at Chilbolton	271
CHAPTER X	
The Oykel—Most peculiar river I ever fished—Paved with salmon and grilse, but they won't take—Fish at the falls when river was in spate, in other days caught with landing-nets only and taken away in cartloads—A slice of luck in the Holyhead express—Fishing in South Africa—Handlines, rods, and other methods—Also a little dynamite—The Knysna—Netting at night in the Lora mouth—A very narrow shave from drowning—Keeping up the dignity of Government once again—Shooting an ibis from bed!—Well! very nearly	306

CHAPTER XI

Hawking—Ananias and Sapphira as falconers and church-goers ; also they sing hymns unmelodiously, very—Chasing a woodcock with a peregrine—Partridge-hawking—Rook-hawking—Rabbit-hawking with a goshawk—Marvellous art in the training of hawks—Good-bye!	324
--	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>To face p.</i>
"THE OLD 'UN" AND "WALLER"; THE TWO WORST POACHERS IN WEST KENT	<i>Frontispiece</i>
CHIDDINGSTONE CASTLE	54
"S—M"	78
ELEVEN STREATFIELDS /: SQUERRYES: 1886	156
SQUERRYES COURT, WESTERHAM	242
MOTTISFONT ABBEY	283
LANDING A BIG ONE ON THE TEST AT KIMBRIDGE	296
AN EXCELLENT FALCONER, A FINE SHOT, AND THE BEST DRY-FLY MAN OF HIS DAY, ON THE TEST	326



SPORTING RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OLD 'UN

CHAPTER I

Return to England after ten years' absence in South Africa—
Gun, cricket-bat and fishing-rod come readily to hand—
Shooting—Its social aspect—What Archie Stuart Wortley has to say about it—A dose for the liver in the silent watches of the night—Royalty expected but didn't come : result—Comic aspect of shooting—Aldeborontiphosco-phornio and his master—Where does the fun come in for those who miss nineteen shots out of every twenty?—Greedy shots—Now that is as it should be—Roosevelt as a big-game hunter—Grouse driving 1, partridge driving 2, covert shooting 3, rough winter shooting 4, also ran, shooting outsides in October—Swaledale, farewell !

I CAN recall lines without end written by poets in scores, nay ! hundreds, who have from time immemorial animadverted on the subject of HOME in stanzas some of which make me feel a better man and almost bring tears to my eyes, while others, such mawkish rubbish are they, only make me feel inclined to hunt down the writers with fierce hounds and incontinently slay them.

Sporting Recollections

I love the verve of old Dibdin's lines—

“At last, 'twas in the month of May,
The crew, it being lovely weather,
At three a.m. discovered day
And England's chalky cliffs together.
At seven up channel now we bore,
While hopes and fears rushed on my fancy ;
At twelve I gaily jumped ashore
And to my throbbing heart pressed Nancy.”

What a rattle and go there is in the words. Can't you see it all before you as the ship glides so smoothly towards the harbour ? Can't you hear the order as the boat nears the jetty, “Way 'nuff, in bow,” as a prelude to Jack taking the fair and expectant Nancy to his arms. Compare the above lines to some of the pithless rubbish we have read about one Emma Morland, who would assuredly have been knocked off the quayside by the stalwart Nancy ; for I can, in my mind's eye, see the buxom young woman as well able to hold her own ; nor do I imagine it would have taken Jack very long to have made mincemeat of that wretched, whining jackass, Edward Gray.

At the end of November 1884 I was steaming up Channel in the good ship *Athenian*, Cape mail steamer, towards home after an absence of very nearly ten years. Now, with the utmost ease I could write any amount of sentimental bosh as to how my pulses were throbbing at the

Of an Old 'Un

very sight of my native land over the port bow ; how, so to speak, Nancy was waiting for me on the jetty with outstretched arms, and how in imagination strewn over the southern counties of England I could see all my female relatives with tears of welcome running down their cheeks, while my sterner ones, with voices betraying much emotion, were requesting a benign Providence to pour down blessings on the head of the returning traveller. I hope no one will venture to substitute for "traveller" the word "prodigal."

As a matter of fact, not for one moment did any of these things cross my mind. There wasn't a single sentimental thought in my composition. I didn't ponder for an instant on any village bells ringing on Sunday evenings as I returned from church with Mary Jane, or "of youth and home and that sweet time when first I heard their soothing chime." No ! Very much the contrary. I had not a thought for any of these things, and as to my dear native land, the only impression that it was making on me as we neared its shores, and as I cowered in the sheltered warmth near the funnel, was that the breezes around it, although no doubt exceedingly exhilarating, were, to one who had been for so many years in the warm and sunny regions of South Africa, most infernally cold. It was,

Sporting Recollections

moreover, most strongly borne in upon me, I remember at the time, that we, a party of four men, one woman and a baby, possessed but one greatcoat among us, and also that as I was not considered the most delicate of the party it did not fall to my lot to take possession of it. I can in this place hear the words of the carping critic calling my attention to the fact that the adjective "infernally" is altogether the incorrect descriptive term to apply to "cold." I beg to differ from him. I ask him to peruse once more the thirty-fourth canto of the *Inferno*, and I trow he will afterwards have but little fault to find with my words "infernally cold."

In due course Southampton was reached, and there were endless greetings from friends and relatives who thronged on board when we reached the dock side. Among others I noticed a stranger, a rather smart-looking young fellow, who was evidently, so to speak, in our galley, and wondered who he could be. In due course we were solemnly introduced to each other, not altogether without chaff, and I ascertained that he was one of my three sons. I had left him a small schoolboy and returned to find him a very much grown up undergraduate, just about to take his degree. Small wonder, indeed, that I did not know him.

I am afraid my chief thoughts, on being in
4

Of an Old 'Un

England and at home once more, ran rather on shooting, fishing and cricket than on more serious matters. I hope I may venture truthfully to assert that during a long and somewhat arduous career, I have, when duty has called, always been found ready to stick steadily to work, putting sport and play wholly into the background. Nevertheless I am quite certain that never yet breathed a man, nor even a schoolboy, who could possibly have been keener for almost every description of sport and play than I was. With the most unmitigated joy, therefore, was I looking forward to taking part in home life in England once again, in sport and games and revelry of all descriptions, and indeed for nearly three years, until I went back to South Africa on service again—and for the last time, praise be to God—I had the most gorgeous time, thanks to all my dear kind friends, that it was possible for a very poor man to have. I played cricket or fished or shot almost every day, and found myself with either bat, rod or gun in hand all over England, and not infrequently in both Scotland and Ireland and also in Norway.

After so prolonged an absence from home as ten years I had rather dreaded that I might have dropped out of the running and been forgotten, and that among my friends with

Sporting Recollections

shootings in my own beloved country of West Kent I should no longer be wanted. Most thankful, most grateful indeed, was I to find it was not so. I had all the shooting I could possibly manage. Indeed, in September 1885 I remember I shot every day except Sundays. In those days we walked up partridges, to our shame be it said, for driving them, in West Kent at any rate, was, if not in its infancy, quite a young child, and we none of us knew much about really handling birds, while the 1st September was still a very much recognized and greatly honoured Saint's day and feast. I am well aware that in Hampshire, in the year of grace 1885, partridge driving was a very fairly developed child; indeed I bore my part, and very indifferently I shot the driven birds, on many occasions in that county before I took my departure to the Cape in 1875. But in West Kent partridge driving, at any rate as far as I knew it, was decidedly ineffectual until much later.

I have been found greatly to blame by many of my friends, that in other pages that I ventured to put before the public, not long ago, I refrained from going into much detail about shooting and fishing. It was certainly not from lack of material. In whatever land I have sojourned, wherever there has been game or fish to reward the

Of an Old 'Un

craft and energy of the hunter, I have shot and fished ; and even in the almost waterless wastes of Bechuanaland I have found pools that were formed from hidden depths underground that contained Barbers—not relatives, however, to him either of the razor or of Seville—a gruesome, loathly fish to look at, but not bad eating withal when small, and for these have I angled with bamboo, twine, and eel-hook when all other forms of sport have failed. Indeed from the quarter-deck of the old paddle steamer *La Plata* I have caught at Buenos Ayres the poison-spiked cat-fish, which have after the manner of their kind grunted as they were hauled from the depth of the Rio de La Plata to the immaculate decks, and there deposited to the abiding wrath of the skipper, who was no sportsman and took not the slightest interest in cat or other fish except with sauce and on a plate. If, therefore, the reader finds himself in these pages overbored with shooting and fishing details, I can only offer my most heartfelt apologies and regrets that I find it so difficult to please all sorts and conditions of men, but I must add that to me it is much easier to put before them what appears, at any rate, to find favour with the gentler, sweeter, and far more lovable sex.

My friend poor Archie Stuart Wortley, magnificent shot and sportsman, fine artist and the

Sporting Recollections

best of good fellows, once wrote, after certain advice to the shooter as to what he had better not do, as follows: "To some others, if they will forgive me, I would say, eat the buttered toast, swallow the tea, drink the champagne, discuss the port, sample the 'old,' make love to the prettiest woman, tell all the best stories and sing the latest songs, smoke the largest regalia and go to bed last, in short enjoy everything, but don't for the love of heaven go out shooting. And who knows but that you may enjoy your week, and be as great an acquisition to your host and hostess as the most serious gunner of us all." Now I agree with the writer of these lines, to the uttermost; they are absolutely the feelings of my own heart, but only to a certain point. For when he finishes up his peroration with the words, "but don't for the love of heaven go out shooting," I turn away in dismay, I am overwhelmed with despair. Not shoot, forsooth! And why not? Do all these charming things that the writer refers to so cunningly—we will by the same token pass by the buttered toast and tea—the champagne, the port, the old brandy, the regalia, and, "far beyond all that the minstrel has told," the making love to the prettiest woman, interfere in the slightest degree with a man's shooting? Nay, verily! rather the contrary. I believe they all combine to do

Of an Old 'Un

him good. I don't mean to say that he may drink a whole bottle of "fizz" and *many* glasses of port, or more than one of the "old," or smoke more than two or perhaps three regalias. Let there be decency in all things. But of this fact I am quite certain, that so long as the divine and lovely creature will suffer him, the longer he makes love to the prettiest woman the better it will be for him and the more deadly will be his execution on the morrow. How many times have I watched the men called together for a few days' shooting and taken note of their varied methods of eating, drinking, smoking and general conduct, in order, as they hope, to be able to produce their least inaccurate shooting. My own experience teaches me that if a man is in the daily—or perchance *nightly* is a better word—habit of doing himself very well, he had far better, if he have a few days' shooting on hand, continue so to do himself. If he is a really good shot, a sudden change of diet is only likely to result in disaster. If he be, however, a bad shot, no earthly abstention from the good things of this world is the least likely to make him a better one. I remember on a certain occasion we assembled, eight guns on the Monday evening, to shoot the four ensuing days in some exceedingly well-stocked coverts. At dinner I was the only one of the party who allowed himself

Sporting Recollections

champagne (it was '80 Pol Roger), and port which was '47. The others drank light claret, and most assuredly in no way whatever did it seem to assist them, for worse shooting I have seldom seen. As the week progressed this forced abstemiousness wholly vanished, and the champagne, the port and the old, old brandy suffered accordingly. On another occasion we were staying, a goodly party, in a most lordly mansion, but where, however, our most excellent host and hostess thought much more about the cuisine, the cellar and the commissariat department generally than the gun-room and the artillery thereof. It was indeed a veritable abode of Lucullus, and among other trifles I remember that a *cordon bleu* and his attendants were driven away each morning early as *avant-courriers* to prepare our lunch at a lodge in the woods, where all appliances and means to boot (for cooking) had been duly provided. As the week approached its termination, to me entered about midnight a figure arrayed in the graceful folds of a dressing-gown of many hues, bearing in its hands a large blue bottle and a tumbler, and the following conversation ensued—

“This is ripping stuff for the liver, old man. I’m going to give you a dose.”

“No! I’ll be d——d if you are, not a drop,” was my somewhat curt reply.

Of an Old 'Un

"What? Are you feeling fit? If you are, you are the only man in the house that is, I can tell you. Why, we've all got livers as big as a football. We've all been taking some."

"Me fit," I answered. "Of course I'm fit, fit as a buck rat. Why shouldn't I be? Just you listen to the words of Solomon, that's me, for a minute, to your vast profit. All you greedy beggars through the whole of this week have been eating unlimited quantities of the very richest dishes you could find to put down into your ungodly tummies. You haven't drunk *too much*, I grant, but you've had quite enough; but as to eating, O Lord! Why you, you lunatic standing there like the ghost of Noah's great-grandfather, with that beastly great blue bottle in your hand, you, as I live by bread, have I seen eating great fids of *pâté de foie gras* three times a day, to say nothing of unlimited 'goes' of the very richest made-dishes, even at lunch. Liver as big as a football! I should think so indeed; I wonder it isn't as big as a bath. Avaunt! out of it, I say, with your d---d blue bottle." And as he departed I added, "Why, man, on Tuesday you and Jack shot like two dear little tin angels, and now, upon my soul I don't believe you could hit a church if you were put inside of it."

I well remember one night at dinner when

Sporting Recollections

I was sitting next my hostess, an exceedingly seductive and savoury *plat* was handed to me and refused. "O, Mr. Streatfeild, you really must take some of that *entrée*, you must ! It takes six pheasants to make the sauce alone." Nevertheless I still resisted temptation, and indeed to me it was none, for I honestly prefer good cold roast beef to any meat you can put before me. Plebeian I grant, and perhaps that may be the reason why at the usually lamentable age of threescore years and ten my digestion is plebeian also, and that I have not sat in a dentist's chair since I was a lower boy at Eton.

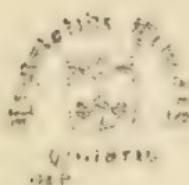
On one occasion at that same lordly establishment Royalty was expected for a certain shoot. Everything was duly arranged, the fatted calf was killed, and without doubt many pheasants—for sauce—bit the dust. The shoots were planned, thought over and digested with a view as far as was possible to put all the birds over Royalty's head, and the evening and the morning were the first day. But Royalty never turned up after all, and in the tents of Judah there was wailing and gnashing of teeth. Nevertheless the boss of the show took care of himself and was quite equal to the emergency. At every beat of the day he placed himself at the stand that had been destined for Royalty, and greatly distinguished himself in missing altogether, or

Of an Old 'Un

hitting at the wrong end, more birds, if possible, than he ever had so treated before. It was a great shoot entirely, and infinite amusement was derived by those who were present. Verily I say unto you that Royalty—God save him—on that occasion caused more amusement and suppressed laughter by his absence than he had ever done in life before by his august and beloved presence.

By the gracious permission of the editor of *The Tatler* I am allowed to insert a few paragraphs, which appeared in that charming periodical under my name, on the comic side of shooting, and indeed to the close observer and experienced sportsman the comicalities in these days of the consulship of Plancus are legion.

There are no comic sides in the shootings of sportsmen. Please don't forget this. Nevertheless in unnumbered shooting parties the comic element is so abundant that it is but seldom lacking to the acute observer. As a rule those who are continually supplying the comicalities have not the least idea that by the real sportsmen who are present they are being quietly laughed at through the whole day. There are, for instance, a few people, most eminently respectable haberdashers, tallow-chandlers, money-lenders, pork-butchers *et id genus omne*, who during the day, and on their own shooting, put



Sporting Recollections

themselves in the warmest place to the best of their knowledge and ability at every stand. If these weird folk could hear the remarks that are made about them by all shooting men in their own neighbourhood, some of them at any rate would be astonished ; while some of them, so accustomed have they been to snatching and grabbing at the very best of everything all through their lives, I verily believe that even at their own shoots they look upon the best place at every beat as their inalienable right. It was at a partridge drive that one of these—a haberdasher he was—asked an old sportsman who was present what was the best way to arrange the guns. “Draw for places and go up one place, or two with an uneven number of guns if you like, after each drive,” was the prompt reply. This was carried out. Now it so happened that Mr. Haberdasher was outside gun during the first two drives and didn’t get a shot, while others got several. He growled at this in no measured terms, said he’d have no more of this drawing for places method, and put himself bang in the middle of the line at every drive for the remainder of the day, to the very great detriment of the bag.

Well do I remember a shoot with another of these greedy beggars. He had lately bought a pair of guns and taken a shoot, and a good one

Of an Old 'Un

too. We guns were being scattered about by the head keeper, who told his master to go to a certain place. No ! no ! Not the place you are thinking of ! Now this particular shooter was craving, on his own shoot even, just the very best place and no other. This time the poor soul thought he had not got it, and exclaimed aloud to the head keeper, "Oh ! but I shall get no shooting there," in the hearing of us all. Ye gods ! Something a trifle comic about that, is there not ? I know a palatial establishment where there is a fair covert shoot maintained at enormous expense. In raking the guns together for this shoot I have noticed that the chief consideration is by no means the capabilities of the guests with their guns, nor even their social charm. A lord who cannot hit a house is a much more desirable personage than a commoner who can slay his thousands. The handle to a man's name is of infinitely greater importance than the manner in which he handles his gun. A great cause of offence to that particular palace, the name of which is not Midas Towers, though it might be, is that a neighbouring noble and most popular man who happens to be a peer and a very good shot persistently refuses all invitations, shooting or otherwise, to what he is pleased to call "that d——d crib." One fine morning the guns were assembling at the hall door. "Ready

Sporting Recollections

for a start, my lord?" was asked of a certain Lord Tomnoddy who had arrived the evening before. "What? To shoot? Me? I never fired a gun in my life! Am I supposed to be invited here to shoot?" O Lord! I have noticed that it was very seldom that any sportsman came twice to stay beneath the shelter of those particular towers.

Usually a good host, who is at the same time a good sportsman, will mete out to all his guns places that will produce for all about the same amount of shooting. He will take note of what each gun is doing and arrange matters accordingly without favour; but, as I have said before, with *sportsmen* there is no comic side. With some others the thing to be considered firstly, secondly, thirdly and altogether is the social standing of the guest, and still more in these days the depth of his purse, no matter whether he can shoot or whether he can't, no matter whether he is safe or whether he isn't. Indeed there are many snobs who would gladly be peppered by a lord, if only he would ask them to dinner afterwards. One of these I have often watched with utter marvel handling his gun. He literally never hit anything. Nevertheless he was usually quite pleased with himself. At a hot corner when he was blazing away on all sides of him, I verily think that good man honestly believed he

Of an Old 'Un

had shot his full share of the birds that were gathered around and behind the forward guns, whereas in all human probability he had not touched a feather. A man I know exceedingly well, a very good shot, was one day told off by our host to stand next to this wretched duffer and shoot as far as was possible at the birds the duffer was likely to shoot at, and about the same moment that he did. The success of the scheme was quite wonderful, and for the remainder of the day and late on into the night, especially late on into the night, the poor duffer could talk of nothing else but his perfectly phenomenal shooting through the wonderful day. There was a well-known correspondent of *The Field* in years gone by who signed himself "One who has fired 20,000 shots at a mark." If instead of the words "a mark" we write pheasants, and add, "and never hit one," it would almost apply to that poor man.

One evening after a very big shoot, he was asked in the smoking-room how many pheasants he had shot during the day. "I'm not quite sure," he replied, "it's either ninety-six or ninety-seven, but we'll soon find out." Then he rang the bell. "Send Aldeborontiphosco-phornio to me," said my lord to the footman. Yes! He really was a lord, somewhat newly constructed though, and very full of the stuff

Sporting Recollections

that in the days of the present radical Government Peers are made of. Then entered to us my lord's valet and leader. His name was not really Aldeborontiphoscophornio, but it ought to have been, for he was simply superb in his grandeur, surely emperor of all grenadiers, much about the same as one Ames in the Jubilee procession. "How many birds did I shoot to-day? Was it ninety-six or ninety-seven?" asked his lordship. "Ninety-seven, my lord," replied Ananias, without a blush or even a twinkle of the eye. Then ensued a roar of laughter that might well have brought down the roof, while my lord merely remarked, "I can't see what on earth you silly fools are laughing at."

I was once in the absence of the owner managing a covert shoot for him, quite a good one. He had given me instructions previously as to the disposal of the guns, and as to those he wished placed in the forefront of the battle. These were two, and they were to remain in that enviable position—it was a very different one from poor Uriah's battle—all day. One was a general and the other was the Right Hon. the Member for St. Blazes. These two were not only to have the best places all day, but, moreover, which was much worse, were not to be backed up by a gun or two behind them, as they did not like having their "eyes wiped."

Of an Old 'Un

They could neither of them shoot a little bit, and it was a piteous spectacle to see the birds all day long streaming away "unhoused, disappointed, unaneled," untouched I mean, over those two old dears' heads. They easily converted what should have been a six-hundred or seven-hundred head day into one of considerably less than three hundred. Now will some one kindly explain to me where their fun comes in? It cannot possibly be in the fact of standing and missing things all day long. Also they look miserable, and curse and swear just like any old long-handicapped parson of a golfer. Truly they tell us they never shot so badly in all their lives before, which is rot, and the thing which is not, for they always do it with the utmost regularity, and just as regularly "gas" exactly the same nonsense about it.

I remember a very good day's partridge driving being to a great extent ruined, or at any rate having its bag reduced by one-half, owing to two most worthy old gentlemen, both atrociously bad shots, being planted bang in the middle of the line of guns during every drive of the day. They fired certainly between them some four hundred cartridges, and as certainly didn't put twenty brace of birds in the bag. On yet another occasion I was watching two young men at work with their guns—

Sporting Recollections

they did fair Etona scant credit that day—and saw them fire two hundred and forty cartridges at one rise of easy pheasants, with a result of only five birds picked up. They both lost their heads as soon as ever the birds began coming, and simply blazed away anywhere, anywhere up in the sky, and sometimes not within twenty feet of the bird shot at. I have more than once watched a company of "Tommies" in action who were new to the game, letting off their Martinis presumably at the enemy. They were, however, all shooting wildly up into the sky, miles over the enemies' heads. These two young men reminded me forcibly of "recruities" at work. How do I know they fired two hundred and forty shots? I superintended the filling of their bags before the rise began! I also enjoyed a good laugh when I saw them and their attendant girls—possibly the cause of such very unsuccessful gunnery—engaged in carrying away the scores and scores of empty cartridge cases and depositing them in the depths of an adjacent ditch. Once more what I wish is, that some kind friend would inform me where on earth the fun comes in.

One hot September day I met a man at a partridge shoot. He was an American millionaire, but had never shot before. He had a pair of new guns, new cartridge bags, new clothes,

Of an Old 'Un

new gaiters, new boots, and last but not least, from *his* point of view at any rate, I should think, a pair of most awfully sore feet. I believe the only thing he killed, or even thought he killed, during that long September day was a partridge that some one else had fired at too. No ! he didn't bag a man, which it appeared to me was bordering on the miraculous. In a certain field of standing barley that we walked in line were a great many young pheasants which kept rising in front of us all the way down the field. He steadily blazed away at them, and no one said him nay, for we none of us, our dear old host least of all, wished to put an end to his most innocent and bloodless recreation. He never made one single bird shed a feather.

It is very wonderful to me how "fearfully" keen, I use the word "fearfully" advisedly, some of these rank duffers are. It seems to me that the more unsuccessfully they shoot, so much the more anxious are they to let their guns off. They hate sparing hens, indeed it is only with very great difficulty that some of these middle-aged shooters who started their shooting career late in life can be persuaded to spare anything, even a "stop." As to letting a bird go because it isn't theirs, they never dream of such a thing for a moment. If they happen to be "back

Sporting Recollections

with the beaters," which by the same token is a thing they don't at all admire, they march along and come right up to the forward guns and then blaze away freely at the forward flying birds, which they have no right even to look at. Many a time have I watched these gentlemen hastening on round a corner and planking themselves between the covert and the forward guns, and then doing their best—luckily their feeble best—to prig all their neighbours' birds. I must allow, however, that these dreadful things are usually confined to commercial circles only. Real country gentlemen, real sportsmen, would sooner perish than be guilty of such selfish atrocities. Sometimes it is just over-keenness leads them astray. They put themselves back, honestly meaning to stay there, but when birds begin to rise to the forward guns they *cannot* resist the temptation to get away on, and get a look in ; they positively cannot help themselves. These to some extent have my sympathy. They would not do it if they could help it. They are quite different from the downright greedy pigs who mean, *coute que coute*, to snaffle the best of everything, and to shoot at every bird that is within reach, as well as a great many that are not.

Not long ago a very good shoot was on hand near the home of one of these same greedy pigs,

Of an Old 'Un

but he had not been bidden to the feast. The G. P., an enormously wealthy, and in his own eyes at any rate an exceedingly important, person, could not believe it, he felt certain there must be a mistake somewhere, so he actually, incredible as it may seem, sent his head keeper to interview the other man's head keeper to try and ascertain the true state of the case. The fact, as I well knew, was that the G. P., by shooting other men's birds and by his incessant firing of low and dangerous shots, had worn out his welcome and could be tolerated no more.

Since the tremendous keenness of youth has worn off I have cared infinitely more for the cheeriness, good temper and unselfishness of my shooting companions than for the amount of the bag. It is far greater pleasure to me to shoot a few score head of game in the company of good sportsmen and cheery companions than to kill hundreds when my mates are greedy shots and, as is too often the case, wholly lacking in all knowledge of woodcraft. One really greedy shot in a team of six guns will very possibly ruin the pleasure of the day for the other five. It is impossible to get away from him. Wheresoever the carcase is there will the vultures be gathered together. In other words, wherever birds are thickest there or thereabouts will your greedy shot, by hook or by crook, manage to butt in.

Sporting Recollections

He is without shame, and no rebuff seems to penetrate his pachydermatous hide.

I need scarcely observe that the systematically greedy shot that we, alas ! so frequently meet in almost every county, and more especially in regions not remote from the City, almost always has good shooting of his own. It must be so, for if he had nothing to offer in return for the shooting he has with his neighbours he would cease to exist. Indeed, as it is he growls and grumbles a good deal that he is so frequently left out in the cold. It is, I fancy, very seldom indeed that you will see a poor man a greedy shot. He is probably asked to shoot because he handles his gun like a sportsman and gentleman, and never takes a bird that isn't his own except by mistake. In good company how frequently does one see a bird go away unshot, followed by the remark made by the two sportsmen over whom it sailed, to each other, "I'm awfully sorry, I thought it was yours." Now that is as it should be. How different it is with a couple of these others who have crawled in to as near the covert as they dare, and let off their four ineffectual barrels to try and grab the bird from their neighbours before even the poor beast of a bird has got decently into the air.

I must allow I do know a very greedy man or two who, although far from being blessed with

Of an Old 'Un

this world's goods, get a great deal of shooting. But they are most excellent shots, and at the same time are most careful never by any chance to bag a bird that belonged to a host with whom they were in the habit of shooting. Verily I have watched this division times without number, and have laughed to see them sparing bird after bird that was on its way to the Squire, Lord Broadacres, or Moses Goldenberg, well knowing that the next beat, when I myself happened to be one of the forward guns, they would come creeping along from their place with the beaters and down every bird in my face. These people have some very pretty nicknames among sportsmen, real sportsmen, but these, and they are not altogether bereft of embroidery, are not customarily made use of to their faces.

What little big-game shooting I have had has been of an entirely negligible quantity, and has usually come in my daily avocations. Some of it was pleasant, but a great deal of it bored me to extinction. I am quite sure I was never intended for a big-game hunter. Buffalo I have indeed shot, and I have lived within easy reach of elephant, and for years had hippos almost at my doors, but I never interfered with either, nor had the smallest inclination to take their lives. Even when I have shot some of the most splendid antelopes, such as koodoo, gemsbok and

Sporting Recollections

hartebeest, I honestly think it has caused me more regret than pleasure, and of late years I have refused point-blank to go out and shoot a stag. I well remember one day not long ago being asked if I would go out to the hill and shoot a stag, or go out sea-fishing with the ladies. I chose the latter, and had an exceedingly happy day, and baited hooks without number, and made the lives of many fishes both great and small exceedingly uncomfortable.

There have been books without end written as to big-game hunting, chief among which that I greatly delight to honour are those by Selous and Cornwallis Harris. A book of very much more recent date by that great self-advertiser, Theodore Roosevelt, I look upon with the utmost contempt. His was a big-game expedition indeed. Compare the manner in which that expedition was instituted and carried through with all its appliances, its doctors, its photographers to take the important and all-conquering Teddy standing in triumph in all his glory on the top of every poor beast that he slew, to say nothing of the pæans of praise that appeared from time to time in the daily press as to the exploits of the advancing hero. Compare the Roosevelt expedition with the work accomplished so modestly and quietly by Harris and Selous ; think of what those two men went through and

Of an Old 'Un

of their unaided victories over the fiercest wild beasts and perils unnumbered. Then ponder on the other with all its gorgeous set-out, its shikarees, its trackers, its printers, its photographers, its parsons and its band. I misremember—in the language of that expedition—the parsons and the band, but I allow they were there all the same. Well may we exclaim, “Look here upon this picture and on this.”

To my mind the most absolutely charming shooting in the world is in the United Kingdom, and the pick of the basket is grouse driving first, partridge driving second, covert shooting third, and rough winter shooting fourth. Of course there are other most fascinating methods of securing feathered game, but the methods I have mentioned appear to me to possess an *entourage* which lends them a greater charm and more alluring details than are met with where fewer guns are required. What can be more delightful than to take one's part in some lovely home among a cheery, well-arranged party for grouse driving, either in the Highlands of Scotland or perchance in the wild dales of Yorkshire. Can aught be pleasanter? Do not forget that apart from the sport itself there are many other things that go far to enhance or mar the exceeding charm of a well-arranged house-party for grouse driving. Think of the stroll in the

Sporting Recollections

gloaming with the fair creature who has been gracing your butt, lucky beggar that you are, through the day, saying, let us hope, many soothing things to you anent the unerring precision of your deadly barrels. Perchance there has been a spate and the river is in perfect order, and before dinner you feel sure you can lead her to where she will be certain to meet that fifteen-pounder that came short to you a few evenings ago. Out goes her bonny Durham Ranger, and comes sweeping across the stream ; another cast a yard lower down, there is a boil in the water, and she has him. Then comes the fun ! Isn't it fun for you, too, my friend, to watch the glowing cheeks and dancing eyes, as she deftly handles her rod, skips from rock to rock, like any chamois, after her fish, and in due course guides the bonny silvery fellow to your feet ? And as you gaff, kill and lay him glistening on the bank, are her thanks not something worth having ? Isn't that witching smile something worth running about after ? Go to ! If these don't make something under your Norfolk jacket tingle, you are no good to me. You can't hit driven grouse, or cast a fly within ten feet of where you wish, and had better resign yourself to a bath-chair and a dressing-gown until the finish.

How well do I remember a certain morning in October, years ago, when I found myself in a

Of an Old 'Un

butt in the north-west corner of Yorkshire. It was a Monday. At sundown, on the previous Saturday, we had finished the last partridge drive of the day in the middle of that most excellent partridge country around Docking, in the north of Norfolk. I at once proceeded to thresh my way through Lynn, Peterboro', Darlington and other places to Richmond, where I found a dog-cart waiting for me, and had a most delightful twenty-mile drive through the heart of lovely Swaledale to find myself gun in hand, fit and unwearied, just as the grouse were beginning to come along. It was what we were pleased to call "the poor relations' shoot," for it was the third time over the moors; nevertheless, we made up over a hundred brace a day. Yes! and they *were* birds, too, and took some pulling down. Picture to yourself a beautiful mid-October morning on those grand moors, rolling away to the far horizon and beyond where the eye could reach.

The roar of the water rushing over Kisden Force in the distance falls soothingly on the ear, the lovely little lady—who has become since that day the wife of one of my best friends—who had been good enough to wait for me on the road to show me the way to my butt, is gracious and smiling, and wears a most becoming but suitable hat and short skirt—wise little

Sporting Recollections

woman—and all is well. A couple of miles off, for a moment against the sky I can just make out the line of drivers, who disappear as they sink the hill, but as we well know are coming on steadily towards us. Soon here and there black dots appear for a moment and disappear again, and we are aware that the birds are coming on. "Ah ! would you, you brute," we exclaim as an old cock grouse, who has come silently skimming along low over the heather, very nearly catches us napping, but not quite ; for he is shot behind us, and not in front as he ought to have been, and tumbles headlong into the heather, first blood of the day. Soon birds begin coming all along the line, and the firing is general. Look ! look at that enormous pack of birds going away to our right, surely they will get away off the drive unscathed. No ! Up comes a flag out of the heather in front of them, and they turn away. Up comes another, and yet another. Good ! good indeed ! Well done, flankers ! Nobly have you saved that enormous pack, which are now heading straight for the butts. Now, guns, do your duty and load like lightning, for at "the poor relations' shoot" we are not allowed two guns. Good men ! they know their work, and let the leading birds through the line unshot at, to show the rest of the mob the road to glory or the grave.

Of an Old 'Un

Soon after the first drive, I was left-hand gun of the line, and behind me was an almost sheer fall of some hundreds of feet down to the river Swale, which flowed along far below us.

"Anything to pick up?" I was asked at the end of the drive.

"Yes; seven, but deuce knows where, for they all fell over the brae and are gone to blazes. We shall never find 'em at the bottom of that infernal precipice."

"All right, old man. Keep your hair on. It's a put-up job. We thought we'd score off you. There's a man waiting down below who has been keeping watch for your birds as they came tumbling over, and probably they are all gathered by now. They usually ain't much of runners by the time they get to the bottom of what you are pleased to call 'that infernal precipice.'"

So and thus that week too passed away. More sporting, more glorious shooting I never took delight in, and that is saying a very great deal, for I don't think there breathes a man who has been a truer lover of good sporting shooting than I have, and indeed, thank God, I am so still, in spite of much white hair and many increasing infirmities. Dear Swaledale, with your unending beauty, fair heights of Kisden, and Gunnerside, farewell! I fear I shall never see you again.

CHAPTER II

Easy grouse driving at Pitfour—Partridge driving—A good day's walk over a shot-out beat—Two invitations for partridge driving—Lunch at one of 'em—Driving in West Kent—Typical day at the end of the season—"Come out, you little beggar, and join in the sport"—Walking up partridges—A good but solitary day in the Holmesdale Valley—Count de Baillet and some '84 Ayala.

THE easiest grouse driving I ever came across was at Pitfour in Aberdeenshire. It is a very flat moor, not big, and very comfortably handled. The birds come straight and easily, and unless in a high wind one ought seldom to miss a shot. A man once went to stay at Pitfour, and the day after his arrival a grouse drive was toward. He confessed at dinner that it would be his first day at driven grouse. He was considerably chaffed during the evening as to what a ghastly mess he'd make of it, how he'd lose his head and shoot miles behind everything, and indeed be a very unhappy person in several different ways. It was a nice still morning. His butt was in the middle of the line, and all was as it should be. At the end of the drive his host and another came to him and this conversation ensued—

Sporting Recollections

"Well, how did you get on? You had some shooting I saw."

"Pretty well, thanks! Yes! I had nineteen shots."

"How many did you kill?"

"Well! nineteen!"

"What a d——d liar you must be then. You said at dinner last night you'd never shot a driven grouse in your life."

"Yes, that was true. I never have shot a driven grouse until this morning, but I have shot tens of thousands of driven partridges, which are infinitely more difficult than any of the 'sitters' I have killed just now."

I think I have helped to make bags of driven partridges under every conceivable circumstance and in many most favourable localities. Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Kent, Hampshire and occasionally other counties have all helped to make my education as little incomplete as possible. But this fact I am quite sure of, and am prepared to assert it on my sacred word of honour. It is that the longer we live and the longer we study not only the world of sport but also the habits, manners and peculiarities of the animals, the birds, the fishes, the butterflies and the innumerable other living creatures in which we take interest, the greater will our own lack of observation and stupendous ignorance be impressed

Sporting Recollections

upon us. Our diagnosis of circumstances, our suggested remedies for manœuvres gone awry, will so frequently prove wrong and futile, that at length—I grant it takes some time—we are persuaded, nay, rather, we are forced into the belief that we know very little indeed, and that when our old friend Robbie Burns made use of those oft-quoted words anent men and mice, he knew uncommonly well what he was talking about. Southey, too, was very wise when he made one of his characters remark that “My age just knows enough to understand how little all its knowledge.” I once heard the remark as to a whist-player, “Poor devil! he doesn’t even know enough to see that he knows nothing.”

When a man becomes aware that in matters that appertain to sport and to bird and animal life he has learnt perchance but one-thousandth part of what there is to know, he is on the high-road to a glimmering of knowledge. In the alphabet that comprises the twenty-four letters from A to Z he has, let us hope, learnt A, and that is a good deal. There are thousands and thousands of men who fancy they know all there is to be known as to shooting and sport, who have never even come to the knowledge that the letter A exists, or that there is an alphabet at all.

Of an Old 'Un

A man I once knew well, and with whom I shot a great deal—he has long been dead, poor fellow—assured me, in an expansive moment after dinner, that he knew there was only one man in the world who was as well acquainted with the art of partridge driving as he was, and that man was the late Lord Leicester of Holkham. Now this, for the possessor of it, was an exceedingly gorgeous belief. I never knew this man shoot away from his home, where everything was of course managed according to his own wild will, and wild indeed it was on occasions. He knew almost nothing about the art of partridge driving. If we got fifty brace of birds when we had seen enough to get three times the number, he was quite contented, and never for one moment became aware that through his execrable management streams of birds had gone away unshot at, and were lost for the day. Although he had an enormous partridge shoot, and only about half shot it, he didn't much like any shooting being done unless—as Paddy would say—his honour was in it. When we were allowed to go forth without him, we generally found that the head keeper, much against his own will, had received orders which made us feel that we were, as the immortal bard puts it, “cabin'd, cribbed, confined,” and, moreover, we were never allowed to continue shooting after

Sporting Recollections

the birds had come on to the stubbles to feed. A d——d silly idea in my opinion, and one, I fancy, I have never come across elsewhere.

Once, and only once, I got a free run and was allowed out, on the promise to be back *in the house* by four o'clock. It was a Saturday and nothing was doing. I asked our host after breakfast if his eldest son, who was then eighteen, and I might go out for a shoot. I got permission to shoot over a certain farm that had already been pretty well worried, as it was near headquarters. As we took our departure, our host again rubbed in about the four o'clock rule, and added, "You'll be pretty clever if you get twenty brace." I smiled a grim smile in my sleeve, and thought to myself, if I can't get more than double twenty I'll eat my hat. There were, as I well knew, swarms of birds, but they were very wild. The cover, chiefly good roots, was well situated. We had three or four good active young keepers with us who were as keen as mustard. I explained my plan of campaign, which was to drive the birds from root field to root field, running as hard as we could lick, get them tired and frightened, and have a drive or two to get them scattered a bit, and then walk them up decently and in order, and dust their jackets for them to rights. We drove swarms of birds in front of us, at first scarcely getting a

Of an Old 'Un

shot, then ran hard round them and got them back again, and there was very soon a change in the spirit of their dream, and the bag began to swell visibly. Then came a fairly productive drive or two. It's not easy to put birds to only two guns, but it helped the nefarious manœuvres, and when we reached home, as the stable clock struck four, our host met us at the door.

“ Well ! Got your twenty brace ?”

“ Rather, and more too !”

“ Not thirty then ?”

“ Rather ! Lots more, lots ! Jump ever so much higher.”

“ Confound it ! You haven't got fifty ?”

Here his face became as long as my arm and he looked exceedingly glum.

To cut a long story short, when our bag was laid out all nice and pretty and comfy on the grass in front of the hall door, it totalled sixty-nine brace and a half, although you may not believe it. (Stranger, do you think I'd imperil my immortal soul for the sake of one canvas-back duck ?) But as our host very solemnly sought the interior of the house we heard him mutter, “ D——d poachers ! never again, by Jove ! never again !” and we never did. Not a dog's chance ! But I tell you the game was anyhow worth the candle that particular journey.

Partridge driving ? Yes ! And there are very

Sporting Recollections

many different descriptions of that same. Just put these two invitations side by side and see which you fancy. "Dear John," runs the first, "we are going to have a partridge drive or two on the 10th and 11th October. I hope you'll be able to come along. You'd better be at the house at 9.30, for I can't tell what our plan of campaign will be till I see what the wind is like." And here is the second : "Dear Mr. Smith, we hope you will be able to join us for some partridge driving on the 8th and 9th of October. We meet at ten o'clock at the house, and shall go to the windmill on the top of the Hangman's Hill to begin."

You accept both invitations. What is the result ? When you arrive at the house in response to the first, you at once enter a big car that is waiting at the door and drive off to the up-wind boundary of your host's shooting. There you find your loaders waiting, and with the words "Very pussy, please," the boss at once leads you all off to stand No. 1. You have already drawn for places while in the car, and know where to go, and not a word louder than a whisper is spoken. Let me here call attention to the fact that on *this* shoot you will never see a soul sitting under the hedge in front of the guns, and you may generally observe that when partridge driving is the order of the day, our

Of an Old 'Un

host prefers that skirts, even the shortest and most graceful, shall be conspicuous by their absence, for well he knows that Jim's barrels will be discharged with much less than their accustomed accuracy when Mabel's eyes are bent on him, and that nothing on the face of the earth can keep Billy's sister's tongue quiet even when the best drive of the day is in progress, and silence is indeed even more golden than usual. On this shoot all is ordered well and there is no discussion between the boss and his head keeper. Everything was settled between them hours ago, and both know their work without a thought. Unless there come a severe change of wind they both know beforehand where every drive of the day will be, and while our host sees to his guns the head keeper takes care of his drivers, and most excellently well he does it, as the bag at the end of the day amply testifies.

Now turn we to shoot No. 2, a very different but far from uncommon affair. When we arrive at the house we are taken into the hall of the palatial establishment and are introduced to two or three of the guns. What strikes us, I might almost say strikes us blind, most strongly about these is the variety and alarming brilliance of their neckties and waistcoats. It is exceedingly plain that not one of these be-necktied and be-waistcoated ones was ever intended for a mighty

Sporting Recollections

hunter before the Lord. We dawdle about and are offered drinks which are generally accepted and consumed, and at last we are driven away to the windmill on Hangman's Hill. When we arrive there we find a drove of keepers in gorgeous array and coloured collars, and the head keeper indeed with gilt buttons. O Lord ! Then, it being already eleven o'clock in the day, our host proceeds to have a long interview with this head keeper as to the first drive. They neither of them, I may observe, know more about driving partridges than partridges know about driving them. We are at the most northerly point of our host's shoot, and not unnaturally, the rendezvous having been settled on a fortnight ago, there is a gale from the south. "Never mind, we must try it," we hear our host observe as he leaves his keeper and returns to us. We are all taken off up wind half a mile or more and posted behind a most excellent hedge—excellent, that is, if only the wind had been in exactly the opposite direction—and from this exalted point of observation we shortly begin to see partridges streaming away to the right and left of the drivers and disappearing far away behind them in the distance, lost to us for the day. Result of the first drive, nil ! And so on all through the remainder of that weary day. We fought the wind manfully

Of an Old 'Un

the whole time and were routed utterly, horse, foot, artillery, army service corps, hospital, and boy scouts. I think our demnition total was seven brace, and upon my soul I wonder we got even so many as that. Had we begun at the other end of the shoot, with even moderate shooting and management we might have bagged quite eighty to a hundred brace. BUT (big "but," please, Mr. Printer) I apologize most humbly to our worthy host for forgetting perchance by far the most important part of the entertainment. We did indeed have a lunch that was most excellent—nay more, perfectly gorgeous in its immensity and grandeur, and—under the circumstances an uncommonly lucky thing—took at least two hours over it. It was better sport than standing in a beastly cold wind and getting scarcely one shot in two hours. Yea verily! there are indeed many and varied descriptions of partridge driving.

À propos of shooting luncheons, a lady of my acquaintance once asked if I could tell her of a good luncheon dish for shooting parties. I replied, Yes! I could, a dish one didn't often see—sausages and mashed potatoes. She sniffed, and with her nose in the air, assured me that nothing would induce *her* to allow such a plebeian thing to be put on *her* table. Now in reality that good woman was a very common

Sporting Recollections

person indeed—the ill-mannered daughter of a small Nonconformist parson who had married a snob with sacksful of shekels. She carried more airs and graces than even Lady Midas herself, or a Gaiety girl who had married a marquis. Sausages and mashed potatoes indeed! But I recovered from my rebuff, and bethought me of the day when 'Arriet told me "I worn't no gentleman," because I prevented the inebriate 'Arry from "'itting 'er over the 'ed with 'is brolly."

I think the most interesting partridge driving in which I have borne my part has been in the well-wooded regions of West Kent. The bags indeed have not been phenomenal, although it has very often been my good fortune to assist in the making of bags of fifty to a hundred brace. But the shooting is exceedingly varied, and in many places so difficult, that not infrequently every bird killed is a victory. Imagine yourself standing on a late October morning behind a hedge in which are oak trees but short distances apart on which the foliage, mottled brown and dying, will soon be fluttering to its grave in the autumn breeze. Hark! A whistle and whirr of wings, and the shrieking birds are upon you under the boughs of the oak. They whirl away right and left, and if, as they twist off from you and sail away down the breeze with the mottled

Of an Old 'Un

oaks for the background, you can knock out your brace with any degree of regularity, then indeed are you worthy to have M.G. (Master of the Gun) annexed to your patronymic.

I have very often thought, and indeed said, that a man who can with regularity kill driven partridges in an excessively wooded country can kill anything. Indeed I have not infrequently noticed men whom I have seen shoot driven partridges in Norfolk and Suffolk, when coming over a treeless hedge twenty feet high in streams, and all flying at exactly the same height and pace, with the utmost regularity and precision, and scarcely missing a bird, fail sadly in their efforts to make good work at our birds in West Kent as they twisted and twirled among the brown oak trees.

In this part of the world we often enjoy what to me is a most exceptionally delightful form of sport towards the end of the season in pursuit of cock pheasants and partridges. If, as is frequently the case, the coverts and shaws, as they are called in our part of the world, are not large they are always taken in one beat. What can be more delightful than to find oneself on a bright winter day with the sun behind one at the end of a thirty-acre covert, with a pal who knows his work on each side? Hark! There is the whistle to start the beaters, and we are instantly on the

Sporting Recollections

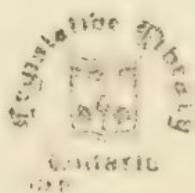
alert. Soon there is a rustle on the dry leaves in front of us, and we see a poor hare poke her head through the end of the wood and look about her. We are right in front of her and the blind beetle doesn't see us, and makes a dash across the open. Poor beast ! Let her go ! We turn our head the other way and pretend not to see her, for we have been told to "shoot hares, please, there are too many left." I hate shooting hares ! But that is another story. "Woodcock forward ! Woodcock forward !" comes ringing to us down the covert. Here he comes straight to the gun on our right. But at the very moment the trigger is pulled the cock twigs him and swerves off like lightning, leaving an ounce of shot two feet behind his tail. No good, my friend ! Your time has come and you are bang in the middle of the second shot from those deadly barrels and lie prone on the grass. Then come some partridges that have been running on in front of the beaters, and get up in twos and threes and suffer accordingly. Then a whole covey comes on, some among the trees, some over them, giving shots that when we kill them clean make us feel like the dwellers on Olympus. Last of all are the old cock pheasants that we have seen dodging about in front of us and trying to hide in brambles and stubs and getting into the ditch outside in the hope of

Of an Old 'Un

dodging back past the beaters. A few fly back and make decent shots for the back guns, while the rest are driven forward to us and come into the bag, for they do not require a conjurer. But they must be killed, and at this time of year our object is to kill many superfluous cocks and not to pull down high rocketers from the heavens.

Last scene of all ! "Come out, you little beggar, and join in the sport," says a beater, as he pokes out a wretched little bunny, who had hidden in an ash stub. And out the poor little beggar comes and scoots away across the open to his doom. "I saw that in *Punch*," says the reader. Very likely he did. I believe it was published in that periodical. Nevertheless that yarn is my very own private property and happened under my own nose, and indeed it was I who shot the "poor little beggar" at a shoot I was managing some years ago at a place called Combe Bank in Kent, which at the time belonged to a very great friend of mine, who not uncommonly goes by the name of "The Pieman."

I have thought since that the slaying of that unfortunate rabbit was a far from ladylike action on my part. The "little beggar" had already been greeted with a most unparliamentary epithet from the beater, and should surely have been allowed to scuttle off free without further molestation either lingual or lethal. Sorry !



Sporting Recollections

Far be it from me to say unkind things or even to think them of one for whom in the past I have felt such true affection in my breast, viz. the sport of walking up partridges. I could almost find it in my heart to sigh over the hundreds—I might almost say thousands—of delightful days in the past, when with cheery companions I have walked the stubbles, the turnips, the clover and the “short cut” in half the counties of England, to say nothing of many in Scotland, in pursuit of those dear little brown birds, and found delight and good sport therein. Where are those cheery companions now? Alas! almost all lying quiet and peaceful beneath the sod in God’s acre, scattered far and wide over the world, while ocean’s depths hide a few brave spirits from our mortal gaze until the sea shall give up her dead.

Thirty or forty years ago, whenever I was in England, it was a rare thing to miss shooting for more than a day or two during the whole of the month of September. Times are changed indeed. Were I now-a-days to receive an invitation to shoot partridges by any method other than driving, I should be just as much surprised as would be the case were I bidden to sit with a friend in the gloaming in the dyke back and shoot sitting grouse as they picked up their evening meal from the stooks. What a charm

Of an Old 'Un

there was about it all nevertheless, what endless enjoyment ; and while I look back on the days when as a boy I went forth with my gun, day after day, on the very limited little manor over which I was allowed to roam in the hope of hunting down and securing a brace or two of partridges, I am quite certain that such methods were very much more likely to implant in the youthful breast a desire for true sport, for knowledge of woodcraft and for close observation of the ways of all living things, than is the education of the young of the human species of the present day. I gravely fear the chief, almost the only, desire of most young sportsmen of these times is a big bag and lots of shooting. Tell me how many out of ten sportsmen of rather immature age could tell you, at a glance, at the end of an October day's partridge driving, which were young birds and which were old, which were cocks and which were hens.

The last time that I remember seriously walking up partridges was in Aberdeenshire about a quarter of a century ago and during the month of November. There were heaps of birds and they were anything but wild. Near the coast not far from Peterhead we first of all drove the birds from the arable land down to the bents fringing the North Sea ; then formed our line and walked along parallel with the coast. The

Sporting Recollections

bents were fairly thick, and also prickly I have noticed, and the ground was exceedingly uneven, and it was no uncommon thing as one topped a rise to come right on the top of a covey. There were, moreover, many most sporting driving shots at birds that had risen far away along the line and were speeding back to their home ground. Rabbits too at almost every step were dashing back to their holes through the bents like lightning, giving most excellent sport and at the same time providing most satisfactory lessons in very rapid shooting. It was indeed pretty work and real sport. Filling a heavy crop of almost knee-high turnips in a fifty-acre Norfolk or Hampshire field with partridges, and then half-mooning it with seven or eight guns and a drove of beaters, is, I am afraid, a class of sport which but little appeals to me. True, the guns on the flank do get a few pretty driving shots, which to them are pleasant no doubt, but to be in the middle of the line and when birds rise near you, and you have to shoot straight at their rumps and then see them fall amidst half a bushel of feathers, makes me feel rather as if I had been shooting at my elderly female relations when they weren't looking. I know I have heard the word "plugging" applied to this class of shooting. I fancy there was yet another word which has been joined neatly on

Of an Old 'Un

to the "plugging," but I forget what it was. Well, well ! there are some few things that are best forgotten.

Yes, indeed ! I can well remember days without number when I was young, and all was *couleur de rose*, when I was more than contented with the sport of walking up partridges. Contented, do I say ? did I not verily deem it sport for kings, nor dream that anything in the way of sporting could be more utterly delightful. The year 1859 was one of the very best years for partridges I can remember, for on the first of September, in a bad country for them and on a farm of only two hundred acres, one of my brothers and I got not far short of twenty brace. The next year, 1860, was a perfectly disastrous season. It rained the whole summer through, and as from May to August I was playing cricket nearly every day, only too painfully well can I recall how mournfully we sat day after day in dripping marquees, for pavilions were as yet almost unknown, and watched the puddles around the wicket gradually assuming the proportions of miniature lakes. That September I shot but one day. It was on a very pretty little shoot called Henden, and on that ground where the year before three of us had shot over thirty brace one day early in the month the same three managed to secure exactly three old birds, and

Sporting Recollections

indeed not one single young bird did we see. I was once walking up partridges under that mighty old chalk pit well-known to fame on Westerham Hill, scene of endless hill-climbing competitions, and I might truly add of disastrous and fatal accidents. In the days I am writing of there were no motors, indeed I don't think there were even boneshakers. There was no tarring of roads, and the poor trout in the lovely little Darent that had its birthplace under yonder lordly beeches in Squerryes Park there below us and rippled away untainted to "join the brimming river," Father Thames, were as yet not seen gasping on the surface, moribund, for lack of their wonted clear stream, or dead on the edge of it, asphyxiated by the filthy, defiling muck that had been thrust upon them. Darell-Brown, to whom I bow, and one Tom Patterson and I were the party. Tom was middle. He was a good shot and usually a fair and generous one. But that day something had gone wrong with the works, his stockings were wrong side out, or stale cucumber was doubling him up, or he was in love perchance. Anyhow there was something entirely wrong with him, for he was shooting in disgraceful style, neglecting his own birds and letting drive at those which were not his, right across us both, and this was making a considerable difference to our bag. We two

Of an Old 'Un

outside guns had a little quiet conversation, at the end of a field, which Tom did not take part in, and we proceeded to a field of clover, into which we had scattered quite a nice lot of birds. Very soon two rose at Tom's feet, and while Darell-Brown gave his attention to one I looked after the other, and they both fell dead not ten yards in front of Tom's nose. He looked round at us but said nothing. As far as was possible in that clover field we took every bird away from him. He had something to say about it when we had finished out the field, and we let him have his say. Then we explained matters and impressed upon him that if he went on bagging, or trying to bag, our birds he'd get the worst of it, for we were two to one. He saw the error of his ways, and expressed his sorrow. There was much peace, and for the remainder of the day he never looked at a bird that wasn't his own. About the same time and on the same chalky range, but under Madams Court Hill this time, I was shooting with Willie Tonge of Morant's Court, the father of poor "Jacky" who played so successfully for Kent many seasons. Alas ! they both are lying peacefully enough now, poor dear fellows, under the waving elms in Chevening churchyard. Willie and I had a charming day, and I remember we got twenty-one and a half brace, which wasn't bad ;

Sporting Recollections

but there were two things on that occasion that are vividly impressed upon my memory. The first is, that we did not once in the course of the day shoot at the same bird or take one that was not legitimately our own. The second was this. I may here remark that we had both been shooting well, Tonge, as was almost always the case, especially so, for he was a very fine shot. A covey rose in front of us and received our four barrels. "Make a brace?" queried Willie. "No, only one," was the reply. "Then why the devil didn't you make a brace?" and answer was there none.

Another day close by, but on a different shoot in the same well-known and beloved Holmesdale Valley I had, alas ! alone, a very satisfactory little day at a place called Combe Bank, which has been mentioned before in connection with a certain rabbit. My entertainer and cousin on that occasion and a tenant of one aforesaid "Pieman"—yes, verily! and times without number on others—was Count de Baillet, one of the most absolutely charming of men, most delightful and hospitable of hosts. I don't think I ever saw that dear good man look quite as happy as when, seated at his own table, he was surrounded by a party of sportsmen who were going to shoot his coverts next morning. Moreover he never shot. My first acquaintance with

Of an Old 'Un

him was very soon after my ten years' absence from home in Africa and commenced in 1884, and on my part indeed most assuredly, and I venture to hope on his also, soon ripened into a warm friendship which, I am thankful to say, still continues unabated. He was then the tenant of Chiddington Castle, which belonged to our cousin, Colonel Streatfeild. I had been summoned to join in a few days' covert shoot, and we were indeed a cheery party. Before we started in the morning our dear old host took me on one side and said that to his sorrow he had noticed at dinner the previous evening that I drank nothing stronger than water, that he couldn't bear to see any guest at his table with an empty glass. Would my principles not allow me to take a few glasses of champagne, for it would please him very much ? I assured him that principles I had none beyond a very strong desire to keep fit and well, but that, having resided so long in a hot country, I had wholly got out of the way of drinking anything that was stronger than coffee or tea, but, at the same time, that I was prepared to change my habits at once at his bidding, and was more than willing when dinner-time came along to walk into his "fizz," so that he should have no further cause of complaint. I fancy he was quite contented with the way in which I bore my part. At any

Sporting Recollections

rate I have had the great pleasure of sitting at his table many hundreds of times in the last eight-and-twenty years, and I can testify that on no single occasion has that dear man found any fault with me over an empty glass, nor with the manner in which I gave it my attention when full. I remember well on that night in November 1884, that I tried to assuage a thirst which had been steadily accumulating for more than a dozen years. The tap on hand was Ayala 1874. I found it a most refreshing and palatable drink.

But to return to my solitary day at Combe Bank. It was at the beginning of October. My host never carried a gun himself. All the more honour to him then that he so delighted to provide sport for his friends. It was, so said my host, merely just a "larder shoot" and not nearly good enough to ask any one to join me. I assured him that it was amply good enough for any "sportsman"—nay, more, I told him I was certain we could make a very decent bag indeed. But his ideas were on a large scale, and so I had to take my way alone, as far as guns went, but I had a keeper and two good men to help me. I knew we should get a few outside pheasants, but for them I cared but little. What "sportsman" does care for early October pheasants? But there was a fair show of partridges, wild but hitherto

CHIDDINGSTONE CASTLE.



Of an Old 'Un

unshot at, and they were the beggars I wanted to catch. There were some ten acres of raspberry canes in an eligible situation, with a nice (or nasty, perhaps, from a fruit-grower's point of view) rough-weedy bottom. If only I could harry the birds about a bit, and then get them into those raspberry canes, I felt quite certain I could make them suffer. I did. We worked very hard and the men walked up most manfully. They fairly earned the somewhat liberal supply of beer that I sent for as we were laying out our bag in the stable-yard at sunset. It was twenty-two brace of partridges, nine or ten pheasants, a couple of hares, and two or three rabbits—total fifty-nine head. With a good shot and a good walker to help me it would have been well over a hundred head, and surely that is plenty, except for an utter glutton.

Once upon a time in Aberdeenshire we were engaged in walking up partridges. We had driven a very good lot of birds into a field of roots nearly half a mile long, but not more than a hundred yards broad, and furrows running, not unnaturally, lengthways. We walked that field out along the drills more slowly than ever marched funeral procession, and of course getting scarcely a shot. Naturally the birds ran on along the drills in front of us the whole way down the field and, when they reached the end,

Sporting Recollections

nipped over the hedge in twos and threes, in half-dozens and dozens, rejoicing greatly. Now our worthy host, who was rather cross, had a good deal to say. He had read that when you have got your partridges into cover, you cannot walk them up too slowly. Rubbish ! When you are compelled to walk with the drills—never do it if you can possibly avoid it—go just as hard as you can lick. Better still. Before ever the guns go into the field at all send three or four men in at the other end. Let them slowly walk twenty yards up the field and stand, and it will do no harm if they wave their handkerchiefs on sticks, and this also serves to remind oblivious guns of their presence. Best of all, *drive* the field out, having posted your guns behind the hedge at the end. All this is written as to walking up partridges and in no way applies to affairs when birds are really wild. Then indeed we know well enough how to handle them. But, after all, as I think has been remarked elsewhere, walking up partridges, except under peculiar circumstances, is dead and buried, and a good thing too.

CHAPTER III

Grouse shooting over dogs—The Cuchullins in the distance
—The “Dragooner,” the writer and a keeper—Five guns
to one dog, the best sprinter annexes the shooting—Bob
and shove-halfpenny—Folk who count their shots, kills
and misses, how do they do it?—A rough shooting—In
the old *Clansman* to Ardlussa—A month in Jura—Wood-
cocks—A yeld hind—O Lord! two yeld hinds!—
Curtain—Deerhounds, Cavack—A magnificent chase in
Jura.

THERE is an infinite charm in shooting grouse
over dogs, but the shooting itself is the smallest
part of the pleasure. Watching the dogs at
work is to me by far the most interesting part of
the entertainment, the actual shooting of the
birds is assuredly the least so. What earthly
pleasure can be derived by a sportsman in the
plastering of birds which, so tame are they at
times, as we have all seen early in August in the
Western Islands—aye, and elsewhere too—that
they have to be whipped up from the heather
by the dog man? There are, indeed, all sorts
and conditions of shooting grouse over dogs. I
can look back with infinite pleasure to many
most delightful days when all went well, so well
indeed that one felt almost inclined to exclaim,

Sporting Recollections

in the words of the poor little girl who died in such perfect peace nearly fifty years ago—

“Linger,” I cried, “O radiant time, thy power
Has nothing more to give; life is complete
Let but the perfect present hour by hour
Itself remember and itself repeat.”

Yes ! I shut my eyes and instantly in imagination comes before me a scene, surely as fair as any on earth. It is evening, and as we rest on the braeside, before trudging home in the gloaming, we see those lovely Cuchullin Mountains spread before us. The setting sun throws the very deepest, blackest shadows among the rocky kloofs and gorges, while here and there he casts a lingering glow on the highest peaks. Could aught be more exquisite ? But away ! The sun is gone, and if we would not break our legs before we reach the lodge, we should be far on our way before night closes down on the scene. The “Dragooner” and I had been told off to a good beat for the day that had not as yet been shot over, and were looking forward to a real good day. At the last moment, however, our good host told us the plans had been changed. His head keeper had told him he could not allow the “Dragooner” and me to have the first day on that beat or there would be but little left for our successors. We would sooner have gone

Of an Old 'Un

without the compliment than without the shooting ; but when we heard that we were to be relegated to a beat that had already been shot over three times and had none too big a stock left on it, our feelings towards the head keeper were anything but those of affection. Nevertheless we had a most delightful day, far more enjoyable, I fancy, than we should have had on the unshot beat, where we should have found the birds the tamest of sitters. We elected as far as was possible to knock the very stuffing out of our beat. We walked very hard indeed and the ghillies did their level best to help us. There was no whipping up of tame birds that day, but the grouse chiefly walked up, flew well and made sporting shots in a good breeze. As we neared the lodge in the evening we were met by our friend the head keeper.

" Well, gentlemen, what sport ? " he asked. Now it is most strongly borne in on my mind that the outside bag that villain expected us to make was about five brace. When, therefore, we replied nineteen brace and a half, his face became almost as long as a cricket stump and much about the same shape, and he said, " Nineteen brace and a half ? Why, they only killed eight brace and a half last time."

" Just so. But then, you see, we know they couldn't walk much, and strongly suspect their

Sporting Recollections

shooting wasn't a great deal better than their walking."

"Nineteen brace and a half," went on the angry man. "Why, you must have killed every bird on the beat."

"Not quite! All but one, we fancy. There was one old cock beat us—he was what you'd call 'joost a graund flier.' Last we saw of him was about two miles off and one mile high, heading straight for Portree. Perhaps you'd like to go and herd him back again."

I never did like that keeper and was always sure he was an outrageous humbug. I don't think he liked either the "Dragooner" or me that evening.

Now I wonder if any one of my readers has ever helped to make one of a party of five guns shooting grouse over one dog. I have done it frequently, but only, so to speak, under one ruler. I cannot believe it possible that there could be two men in the world so utterly, hopelessly, brutally ignorant of everything connected with sport who would perpetrate such an atrocity. It was, nevertheless, marvellously amusing. The prevailing sentiment among the party was, snaffle all you can! Shoot at everything that gets up, especially grey hens (I never was present with that crowd so late as the 20th August), and wait for nobody! When the dog got a point the

Of an Old 'Un

finest sprinter got up first, waited for no one, put the birds up and blazed away. O ! but it was a spectacle for gods and men to look on at. I thank my God it is not in the very smallest degree probable, nay, more, it is not possible, that I can ever be found in such a battle again, neither forefront, hospital, nor baggage wagon. I had to obey orders in those days : Poor devil ! Quoth the raven, Nevermore !

It was a most exceptionally wet day, even for Skye ; the hills were blotted out and the rain was coming down without ceasing. The river was roaring through the glen, thick and impossible, putting even fishing out of the question. Shooting was utterly hopeless. So we were scattered about in the smoking-room, some of us trying to read more or less stale papers, one or two looking hopelessly across the bay towards Raasay, and all of us saying nasty things about the usual weather in the Hebrides and of Skye more particularly. Personally I was engaged ruling a few lines with a pencil on a square-sided deal table that stood in a corner of the room. Now there are some of us who have heard of a little game called "Shove-halfpenny," but, on the other hand, there are a great many of us who haven't. Also there are some of us, especially those who have taken a great deal of pedestrian exercise all over England, who have

Sporting Recollections

absorbed liquid refreshment, of sorts, in roadside hostels, called by the initiated “country pubs.” Those among us who are of an observant nature will have taken note that on the tables in the bar-rooms of some of these “pubs” lines have been traced, probably with a sharp fork, at right angles to its sides. These lines form the “court,” so to speak, on which “Shove-halfpenny” is played. A certain line is chosen as the haven where you would be, the combatants are each armed with a penny, and their object after placing their pennies—one at a time, please—two-thirds on the table and one-third off it, is to knock their penny with the flat of the hand, in the manner we played “squails” in the past, on to the line chosen, or as near to it as possible. This game among the frequenters of “country pubs,” the village Hampdens and the mute inglorious Miltons who have plodded their weary way to where the open, though somewhat beery, portals, “far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife,” bid them welcome, is usually played for pints, or even for pots, of four ale.

Having thus, very feebly I fear, described this humble and inoffensive game, let me return to the Sconser smoking-room. I was practising with a penny when to my side strolled one Bob, and asked what on earth I was doing. I ex-

Of an Old 'Un

plained matters. Bob, although by no means averse to a little flutter on any game of chance or even on a horse-race, had never heard of "Shove-halfpenny." Having had half a dozen shots up the table with my penny, he exclaimed with scorn—

"Well! I do call that a rotten game. There's nothing in it. Why any d——d fool could play just as well as any one else. Why, I'll play you right now, old man, a bob a shot. Fire away!"

"All right, Bob," I replied. "Probably you're right, but at the same time it's possible you may change your opinion."

The next remark of Bob's is indelibly impressed on my memory, and this is how it ran—

"D——n! That's thirteen bob to you, and thank you kindly. That's quite enough 'Shove-halfpenny' for me this round; and if ever you catch me playing the silly game along with you again, you jolly well let me know. There's a precious deal more in it than I thought."

"Well, Bob," I replied, "to tell you the honest truth I rather fancied you'd come to that conclusion before I'd done with you."

I notice in many of the sporting periodicals letters from men who have the deuce of a lot to say, not only about their guns, but, moreover, about their individual performances with them; nay, more, they even go so far as to count their

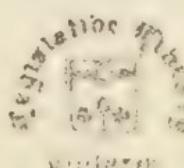
Sporting Recollections

kills and misses—verily I am of the belief that the latter very largely predominate—they even count their shots, or say they do, and keep a record of the whole thing. Now I am most anxious to know how they do it, I am thirsting for information as to how it is possible to come to an accurate conclusion. Surely these sportsmen can fire but very few shots, and they must, moreover, be more fortunate than most of us in the way of losing—to put it politely—cartridges. Now when we others go for a three or four days' shoot, our gunmaker sends on to the place where we are going to shoot what we consider the requisite number of cartridges. We do not open the boxes ourselves, nor do we fill our bags in the morning, at any rate the people with whom I have been so fortunate as to shoot do neither. How, then, in the name of heaven, can a man, unless he shoots on only the most insignificant of shootings, keep a correct tally of what cartridges go through his gun and what through dishonest pockets. It is wholly impossible. I only shoot now-a-days moderately, and very seldom get rid of more than 3000 cartridges in the season, but even with that very limited number it would be next door to impossible to keep a correct tally of the number of cartridges used, and of the hits and misses ; not only impossible but, moreover, utterly undesirable. Every one of us who

Of an Old 'Un

is a sportsman is well aware of whether he is doing his duty properly by the birds that come his way, and that is enough. He wants nothing more. It is by no means uncommon when there happen to be several of these gentlemen who count their shots, on hand, to see two or three of them "let go" at the same bird, which eventually comes slanting down to Mother Earth a couple of hundred yards off, runs like blazes to the nearest hedge, and is eventually scrambled into the bag by the help of a retriever and a keeper. I want to know who of the three "sportsmen" enters the bird in his record of kills and misses, and whether they all three enter it as a kill. I fancy it would not require a very Machiavellian conjurer to point correctly to the heading under which it would appear. Again, after a day on which three hundred pheasants had been killed, there would usually be a "pick up" of from ten to fifteen birds next morning. How many of these does the "counting man" put to his own credit, or did he perchance already count them and tick them off on his beastly registering machine when he saw them wobble away, hard hit in the rump, with the feathers flying off them as they disappeared?

What is usually described as "rough shooting" does not, when existing in England at any rate, appeal to me. It generally means a very few



Sporting Recollections

shots of an exceedingly domestic nature at half a dozen pheasants and a few rabbits hustled out of hedgerows. This is a poor form of sport. One sees in the advertisement columns of certain newspapers, "Good rough shoot in Kent, Sussex or Surrey as the case may be, of 400 acres, no limit as to bag, rent £40." Well, we know that if on this "good rough shoot" there yet exist one old cock pheasant and one partridge that has neither produced an egg nor helped to do so in the present century, above ground, and under it but one broad-faced, long-whiskered, flea-infested old buck rabbit, these will be found on closer acquaintance to be the only denizens of the domain. But if, on the other hand, we are told of a good rough shoot in the much bleaker and wilder regions of Ireland, Scotland and the surrounding islands, do not our pulses instantly bound through their channels and does not our heart leap and our eye glisten with the thought of many wild fowl, an old blackcock or perchance even a "caper" scudding away through the fir-trees, and woodcock in dozens. Ah ! ye gods ! That is rough shooting indeed ! Thankful am I that even if never again such rough shootings fall to my lot I have endless most glorious days to look back upon.

Many years ago, soon after Christmas I found myself steaming away on the old *Clansman*

Of an Old 'Un

round "The Mull," on my way to Ardlussa in the Island of Jura. I was awakened at about three o'clock next morning by a steward and told to hurry up as we were opposite Ardlussa House, but that there was as yet no sign of a boat. It was inky dark, and for all that I, indeed, could distinguish we might have been in the middle of the Atlantic or anywhere else. The old skipper was getting fussy and kept saying he could wait no longer, and I was beginning to wonder how on earth I should thresh my way back along the coast from Oban, to which port it appeared probable I was going to be carried when, O be joyful! a light was seen in the distance, which soon after came dancing across the waves. As the boat came alongside, even as the steamer was beginning to forge ahead, I was with but little ceremony, but by able and willing hands, thrust overboard and heaved among the stalwart vikings in the boat, who were all, of course, McNeills, with my gun and impedimenta on the top of me. The old *Clansman* was swallowed up in the darkness and in half an hour I was sitting drinking most welcome hot coffee in the delightful halls of Ardlussa, into which, alas! I shall never more find my way. I had indeed a glorious month, and was out with my gun from daylight to dark every day after something or other. I was not

Sporting Recollections

allowed an entirely free hand, for what was the use of bringing in more game than could be consumed. But I shot all the waterfowl, woodcock and snipe that I could, which gave me most ample amusement. About once in every week my brother, who was my host, sent off to the south a large box of game and rabbits, and the day before its dispatch we always shot together and made the best bag we could, and often went far afield to the other side of the island to glens called Glendebedel and Glengarressdale, from which we could see the islands of Colonsay and Scarba, and overlook the far-famed Corryvreckan, concerning the terrors of which I suppose more thrilling legends (to speak quite mildly) have been set afloat than even about the Maelstrom itself. These two glens were celebrated for woodcock and, moreover, generally produced a few absolutely wild cock pheasants. Our bags when we went together were usually somewhat on these lines : Three or four pheasants, same number of duck, half a dozen snipe, a hare or two, plenty of rabbits when near home, a curlew or two and a dozen or fifteen woodcock. I remember on one occasion my brother and I got thirteen different sorts of game without, of course, any grouse or blackcock.

Most unfortunately during that winter there was no hard weather at all on the mainland to

Of an Old 'Un

drive the "cock" over to the islands, so of course we didn't get a tithe of what have been shot there. The old keeper at Ardlussa, "Ouilliam," used to make my mouth water with reminiscences of the woodcocks that had come over to Jura in the past during prolonged frosts on the mainland. Well do I remember an account old "Ouilliam" gave me of a man who once spent the month of January at Ardlussa after "cock" and shot four hundred and sixteen ; and, added "Ouilliam," "He was sair auld and he couldna shoot and he couldna walk. If you and your brither yon had been here then, man, we'd 'a' had weel ower a thoosand."

All I can say is that I most deeply regret that I and "my brither yon" were not there. But in spite of those hecatombs of woodcocks in Jura, I firmly believe that the adjacent island of Colonsay is distinctly better. The accounts I have heard of "cocks" in that island fairly make me tremble. Indeed, from what I have seen myself, and I have shot on Colonsay a good deal, as the haunt of woodcock the two islands cannot be compared. Colonsay contains wooded glens that are a perfect dream of delight as covert for woodcock. At the top of one of these glens a lady once stood gun in hand and the little corrie was beaten out to her. She had twenty-seven easy shots and never touched a

Sporting Recollections

feather. There ! Would you like to have stood in her place, O my brother sportsman ? She told me about it herself and I have not the slightest reason to doubt her veracity.

Ardlussa in those days was not, as is now the case, wholly deer forest, but my brother had killed many stags there and I am thankful to say it is still my happy lot to wander frequently in halls on the sides of which many a lordly head looks down, and is evidence of his prowess, for he was indeed a deadly shot. He sent me out one morning with old "Ouilliam" to get a yeld hind and impressed upon me most strongly that under no possible circumstance was I to shoot more than one. I can hear—"in my mind's eye, Horatio"—as I write, "and not more than one, young feller" (I was young in those days and would I were so still), "as you value your life." So away we went, Ouilliam and I, up into the hills, right away up Glen Vachigan (I haven't the slightest idea how it is spelt, but I remember that it means the glen of the calf) and three-quarters of the way across the island. Not long after we started I jumped across what my companion called a "wee bit burnie" and was met instantly with the rebuff, "Man Frank" (pronounced Marn Frarnk), "ye suldna dae that ; aiblins ye'll be needing yon loup before ye gang hame the nicht ; joost pit yer feet through the

Of an Old 'Un

watter and dinna loup." We saw no hind that "Ouilliam" fancied till the afternoon, but then we made out three, with a young stag accompanying, and my guide said that any one of the three would do. They were feeding away from us up wind, and with much care we followed them up into a little corrie below us and knew we should get an easy shot against the skyline as they passed over the opposite brae. I was lying flat in the heather and had a remarkably easy shot and felt perfectly certain I had shot straight. Not so the trusty "Ouilliam," who exclaimed, "A clean miss, ye didna touch her ; rin, man, rin to yon rock down the brae, rin hard and ye'll get another shot as they pass ye on their way across the glen." Rin I did, like blazes, and got to the rock just in time to see the last hind gallop past not sixty yards off, a broadside shot. It required no conjurer to pull her over, and as she lay stone dead before me I put up a silent prayer that "Ouilliam" had been right about that first shot and that it had indeed been a clean miss. But I had very grave doubts. While he was gralloching the hind I went off to make assurance double sure as to that first shot. What "Ouilliam's" idea of a "clean miss" was I failed to understand, for O, horror of all horrors ! when I topped the brae on which she had stood, there in the heather not fifty yards

Sporting Recollections

away lay the victim of the clean miss, shot through the heart; and I had to wend my sorrowful way home and face the music. It was to me an uncanny dirge indeed. I did catch it. The trumpet blew with no uncertain sound. I think I deserved it, for I ought to have *known* my shot was right and acted accordingly ; but I, being young and in that class of sport at any rate inexperienced, did not like to put my opinion against that of such an experienced old stalker as my companion. But it's too late, nearly fifty years too late, to remedy the evil now and to shed tears over that particular jug of spilled cream.

Some years before the time of which I am writing the McNeills of Colonsay and Jura had been the owners of the breed of what were, I believe, the most magnificent deerhounds that ever existed. Two of these had been given to my brother, and most beautiful creatures they were. There was a gate in his stable-yard in England fully seven feet in height, and it was a picture to see one of them called Cavack sail over that gate, gracefully just touching the top of it, with the most perfect ease. It must indeed have been sport worth a great deal of trouble, watching two of those glorious hounds chase and pull down an unwounded stag. Few people read Scrope at the present day. I hope I

Of an Old 'Un

may be pardoned for reproducing an account of his of how Buskar and Bran, which belonged to my brother's father-in-law, Captain McNeill, performed such a feat about eighty years ago among the wilds of Ardlussa. The account runs—

" No time was to be lost, the whole party immediately moved forward in silent and breathless expectation, with the dogs in front straining in the slips ; and on our reaching the top of the hillock we got a full view of the noble stag, who having heard our footsteps had sprung to his legs and was staring us full in the face at a distance of about sixty yards. The dogs were slipped ; a general halloo burst from the whole party and the stag, wheeling round, set off at full speed with Buskar and Bran straining after him. The brown figure of the deer with his noble antlers laid back, contrasting with the light colour of the dogs stretching along the dark heath, presented one of the most exciting scenes that it is possible to imagine. The deer's first attempt was to gain some rising ground to the left of the spot where we stood and rather behind us ; but being closely pursued by the dogs he soon found that his only safety was in speed, and (as a deer does not run well up hill, nor like a roe, straight down hill) on the dogs approaching him he turned and almost retraced

Sporting Recollections

his footsteps, taking, however, a steeper line of descent than the one by which he had ascended. Here the chase became more interesting ; the dogs pressed him hard, and the deer getting confused, found himself suddenly on the brink of a small precipice of about fourteen feet in height, from the bottom of which there sloped a rugged mass of stones. He paused for a moment as if afraid to take the leap, but the dogs were so close that he had no alternative. At this time the party were not above 150 yards distant and most anxiously waited the result, fearing from the ruggedness of the ground below that the deer would not survive the leap. They were, however, soon relieved from their anxiety ; for though he took the leap, he did so more cunningly than gallantly, dropping himself in the most singular manner so that his hind legs first reached the broken rocks below ; nor were the dogs long in following him ; Buskar sprang first and, extraordinary to relate, did not lose his legs ; Bran followed, and on reaching the ground performed a complete *somerset* ; he soon, however, recovered his legs and the chase was continued in an oblique direction down the side of a most rugged and rocky brae, the deer, apparently more fresh and nimble than ever, jumping through the rocks like a goat, and the dogs well up though occasionally receiving the most fearful falls.

Of an Old 'Un

From the high position in which we were placed the chase was visible for nearly half a mile. When some rising ground intercepted our view we made with all speed for a higher point, and on reaching it could perceive that the dogs, having got upon smooth ground, had gained on the deer, who was still going at speed, and were close up with him. Bran was then leading and in a few seconds was at his heels and immediately seized his hock with such violence of grasp as seemed in a great measure to paralyse the limb, for the deer's speed was immediately checked. Buskar was not far behind, for soon afterwards passing Bran he seized the deer by the neck. Notwithstanding the weight of the two dogs which were hanging to him, having the assistance of the slope of the ground, he continued dragging them along at a most extraordinary rate (in defiance of their utmost exertions to detain him (and succeeded more than once in kicking Bran off. But he became at length exhausted ; the dogs succeeded in pulling him down, and though he made several attempts to rise, he never completely regained his legs. On coming up we found him perfectly dead with the joints of both his forelegs dislocated at the knee, his throat perforated and his chest and flanks much lacerated. As the ground was perfectly smooth for a considerable distance round the place where

Sporting Recollections

he fell, and not in any degree swampy, it is difficult to account for the dislocation of his knees unless it happened during his struggles to rise. Buskar was perfectly exhausted and had lain down shaking from head to foot, much like a broken-down horse ; but on our approaching the deer, walked round him with a determined growl and would scarcely permit us to approach him. He had not, however, received any cut or injury ; while Bran showed several bruises, nearly a square inch having been taken off the front of his foreleg, so that the bone was visible, and a piece of burnt heather had passed quite through his foot. Nothing could exceed the determined courage displayed by both dogs, particularly by Buskar, throughout the chase, and particularly in preserving his hold though dragged by the deer in a most violent manner. This, however, is but one of the many feats of this fine dog. He was pupped in the autumn of 1832 and before he was a year old killed a full-grown hind single-handed. The deer was carried to the nearest stream, which was at no great distance, for the purpose of being washed ; which ceremony being performed we sat down to lunch in great spirits."

CHAPTER IV

My host and nephew "S—M"—Oransay—Shooting of the most varied description in Colonsay and Oransay—"Waller!" God bless his brown eyes and black curly coat—A trifle of an upset at the edge of "the strand" one evening—Archie appears nervous on wheels and also a little later on in a boat—Oransay Priory and St. Columba—The McNeills—The mermaids of Oransay, otherwise seals—Dhu Heartach lighthouse—A very narrow shave for a shipwreck on Eilan-nau-Rou—Everlasting wind—A sorrowful upset thereby—S—M's crowners, *i.e.* Some of 'em—Hangman's Hill and its ancient rocky gallows.

EXACTLY thirty-five years after that most charming winter visit to Ardlussa when my host was my eldest brother, I found myself, accompanied by my wife and daughter, on my way to the adjacent island of Oransay to spend the whole winter with that same brother's eldest son as our host. In the Ardlussa days he was a tiny boy in the nursery and far too small to come out with us even near home or to go far from the shelter of his nurse's wing. But thirty-five years make a very considerable difference, and long before we took our way to Oransay Priory the tiny boy had developed into an exceedingly stalwart man well over six feet high and had become as fine and unselfish a sportsman as could be found in England. A good man over a country, a fine

Sporting Recollections

shot and county cricketer, and an excellent fisherman. As a salmon fisherman I don't know a better. Such was my host for the whole of the winter months, and as he had been my host both for shooting and fishing times without number before, and I knew to the uttermost what manner of man he was, I looked forward with infinite pleasure to what I knew would prove some of the most sporting experiences of my life. The island of Oransay itself was rather more than 2000 acres, composed of heather, bents along the shore, and in some of the valleys swarming with rabbits, and on the northern side of the island rocky, heathery, bracken-clad banks, beloved of woodcock. Over and above the shooting on Oransay, S—M, as I will call him, our host, had hired the shooting rights of the south end of Colonsay from his uncle, the late Sir John McNeill, about three or four thousand acres, so we had quite as much as we could manage.

The varieties of the bags we made were most delightful. There were several coveys of partridges near the house which could always be found on the adjacent stubble, which we treated with the most gentle and ladylike hand, leaving certainly more than half of them behind us. Frequently from the upper windows of the Priory we saw on the same stubble rock pigeons



"S - M"

Of an Old 'Un

that had come all the way from their homes in the cliffs at the rocky north coast of Colonsay, for a hard-earned feed, and then a stalk would ensue and anon a pie. We found those pigeons a most welcome addition to the larder. Bernicles came along in numbers towards the middle of October and, like the poor, were always with us, but usually at a distance, for it is no easy thing to get oneself within shot of the wily goose. The fields on Oransay, mostly pasture land, were divided by stone walls and, hidden by these, when circumstances were favourable we had many a successful stalk and, moreover, when the sky was clear circumvented a few by driving in the moonlight. A flock of Bewick's swans paid us a visit and for many days were visible on the strand between the two islands, but were never, crafty beggars, in a position that made it possible to get at them. It was at low tide quite easy to walk dryshod from Oransay to Colonsay, somewhat less than a mile across the strand, but woe betide you if you dallied too long and allowed the incoming tide to steal a march on you, for then must ensue a long, weary wait in the cold of many hours. Truly we had a boat at a place a mile or so away where the passage was deep and not more than a couple of hundred yards across, and this we utilized on some occasions. I only once was caught at all badly by the tide,

Sporting Recollections

and even then got across all right without swimming. O, but it was cold ! and my poor retriever "Waller" didn't like it at all and was very thankful indeed when he touched bottom. "Waller" has been a somewhat celebrated character in his time, and is still exceedingly well known on many of the shootings of West Kent. But alas ! like his master his day is very nearly over, and we find now that while even a gentle ascent makes one of us "grunt and sweat under a weary life," an old French partridge with only a broken wing can clean outrun the other. Never mind, "dear Waller," you and I are both very fully alive to the fact that "every dog must have his day," and by Jove ! we have indeed had it to the full ; and now—

"When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown ;
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down"—

No ! not even now will we "creep home and take our place there, the maimed, the spent among"; nay, rather will we keep our flags flying, and so long as our dear good friends bid us welcome, struggle on manfully to the end, miss our birds, tumble head over heels into ditches with a smile, and enjoy everything just exactly as long as God will let us.

"Waller's" career has been a very varied one.

Of an Old 'Un

He was born in the wilds of Namdalén and was the pup of an old retriever of mine that I had taken over to Norway for rypeshooting, and a Norwegian setter, a good little lady from both a sporting and domestic view. "Waller" and his brothers and sisters had been given away before our arrival at our Norwegian home in 1900. One morn appeared a damsel of the country leading on a bit of string a black retriever puppy which she averred was no good ; so she had brought him back again. I asked what education they had proposed for the puppy, and the reply was that it had been that of a goat-herd. I am no sort of a judge of goat-herds or indeed of goats, although I am prepared to swear that on many braesides in the Hebrides, when I have suddenly got their wind, I have nearly been knocked backwards. I am also quite ready to admit most freely that there are a great many people who would be at no pains to hide the fact that they are absolutely certain that it is among the flock of goats rather than sheep that my own future destination lies. I looked "Waller" over and thought him quite a nice-looking pup with an exceedingly intelligent face, and I therefore elected to keep him myself and commence his education forthwith. I have never regretted it, and a most wonderfully useful servant as well as a charming and affectionate

Sporting Recollections

companion he has proved. I brought "Waller" and a most lovely Norwegian elkhound home together, although I must admit that what with permits, rules, regulations, and, last, but not least, quarantine, I had an infinity of trouble. But that time also, at any rate, the game was well worth the candle. Moreover, at the end I managed to get a little fun out of the quarantine arrangements. To me one evening, grunting, perspiring, and mopping his face, entered Sergeant Dogberry of the Kent County Police.

"I am most truly sorry, sir, but I shall have to summon you. There's no help for it. I saw Miss Streatfeild in the village only a few minutes ago with both your Norway dogs running free and they had not even got muzzles on."

"You don't mean it, Sergeant. Can't anything be done?"

"Nothing, sir, nothing! You know that as well as I do. They shouldn't be out together, and must not be in the road at all unmuzzled. Surely you know all the regulations as well as I do."

"Better, Sergeant, I think. But you're quite sure nothing can be done for me to avoid being summoned?"

"Nothing, sir. It's quite impossible. I'm really very sorry, but I must do my duty and report the case."

Of an Old 'Un

"Well, if you must, you must, of course," I went on. "But suppose I had a document in my pocket which set the dogs free from quarantine by order of the Home Office, wouldn't that make any difference?"

"Of course it would, sir, but that's impossible. You couldn't have such an order without my knowing all about it."

"Nevertheless, I have, Sergeant! I got it yesterday, and here it is. So now you can cut along and get your summons issued as fast as you like. But half a minute before you go. Suppose you come indoors and take a little light refreshment. You look to me as though you rather wanted it."

"Waller" developed into an exceedingly useful retriever, and during the last twelve years has saved me and my friends endless birds. The setter blood in him has also made him most useful. During the winter I shot in Colonsay and Oransay he was invaluable, and was the means of putting a great many woodcock and many other pretty things into the bag. On three occasions I saw him catch woodcock as they rose from the heather. This seems almost incredible, for the dog did *not* pounce at them on the ground, but, on the contrary, stood perfectly staunch at his point and as the bird quitted its "seat" in the heather bounded at it, and, as I

Sporting Recollections

say, on three occasions caught it. I will at once confess that for rough shooting I infinitely prefer a "general utility" dog to one that sits behind you with manners that are perfect for church or a prayer meeting, but for retrieving a real old pedestrian cock pheasant who is quite capable of running across a couple of fair-sized parishes I prefer a generous and high-spirited dog. When big days are on hand, personally I prefer to leave my retriever at home for many reasons which are obvious. When "Waller" was young, I played golf a tremendous lot on a course called Limpsfield Chart, near the boundary of Kent and Surrey, which was in those days overgrown with masses of gorse in all directions and in which golf balls were lost in hundreds. What more to be desired than a clever dog to retrieve them? I was looking on at a country cricket match one day and "Waller" was lying at my feet. A hefty smack to square leg deposited the ball in the bowels of an adjacent wood in which they sought it in vain. Then I was approached and asked if my dog would find a cricket ball. I replied that I had no idea, for I had never asked him to try, but I added that we would soon see. So I showed "Waller" a cricket ball and told him to go into the wood and seek. In a very few seconds he was out again with the lost ball in his mouth. Then

Of an Old 'Un

I took him to Limpsfield Chart, and in a very few days he was an absolutely perfect golf-ball finder. He was simply unfailing, and at the end of a day's golf we used usually to go round the links together and retrieve balls that members had lost, handing them over when we knew the owners and chucking the rest into my locker. I believe in the few years I played golf regularly "Waller" put some thousands of golf balls into my hands. I was once offered £200 for him by an itinerant golf-ball searcher who made a good living at it. My reply had better not be chronicled. I feel quite sure my publisher's blue pencil would supervene with no uncertain erasure. The distance at which a dog with a good nose can find a golf ball is scarcely credible.

Very often we drove across to Colonsay in a farm cart, with a trusty old horse who knew the passage across the strand uncommonly well, and never seemed to mind the water a bit, even when it was well up his sides and swashing about in the bottom of the cart. There was a most ridiculous scene one evening, and O ! how we all did laugh. I except Archie, the ghillie, who seemed to think it was no laughing matter and took it very seriously. My daughter Evelyn, S—M and I were seated side by side in front with our guns between us and a rug over our legs. Evelyn was driving. We had just come

Sporting Recollections

through the strand and were ascending the shore. S—M was in the deuce of a hurry for his tea, or at any rate was, or seemed to be, in a hurry for something or other, and seized the whip out of Evelyn's hand and, taking it by the middle, hit the fat old horse with the butt end a fell stroke across the rump. The trusty animal—unlike salmon—being all unused to the butt on that part of his person, gave one tremendous grunt and bounded clean out of all the harness, which was indeed most abnormally rotten, and retired to a respectful distance, still grunting. Well, not unnaturally, the shafts went straight up into the air, and before we could have said even "Jack" not to mention "Robinson," we three found ourselves flat on our backs in the road, the rug still over our legs and our guns still *in statu quo* between us. Archie, the game and the dogs were freely scattered all over the place, and Archie with sorrowful face declared he was "sair birzed and churted," but I fancy he was only frightened a bit, and the Lord only knows why, for there was no cause for anything but peals of laughter. Why, even the trusty "Waller" laughed, but I have always fancied that good dog had a very strong sense of humour. We got up by degrees, collected Archie and the game, the dogs and the old horse, who hadn't gone far and was still grunting, and then

Of an Old 'Un

S—M calmly remarked, "Look here, 'Old 'un,' Babe (that's Evelyn) and I will go on and order tea, and you and Archie can just patch up the harness and bring the rest of the kit along." And that, I presume, was what S—M would call a fair division of labour. On another evening I was returning from Colonsay by the boat passage, alone in the dark, and I had two dogs with me. It was blowing a full gale, with sleet and snow on its wings, dead in my face. The instant I got the boat launched and put forth into the deep the dogs, poor beasts, tried to cower down under the shelter of my body, thereby continually stopping the movement of at least one of my sculls, and then of course round came the bow of the tub, and instead of reaching our haven on the further shore we were instantly blown back to the one we had just quitted. Moreover, the sculls were not particularly robust, and even when I had succeeded in getting the bow of the boat into the eye of the wind, I dared not pull quite so strongly as I would for fear of a smash, when probably we should have been all drowned together, and most assuredly I should have lost for ever my beloved and trusty gun beneath the waves on those rocky and somewhat treacherous shores. Three several times did I get half-way across the passage and was blown round and sent

Sporting Recollections

flying back again. But the fourth time, somehow or other, we managed it and landed the right side of the channel, and thence I blundered my way home to the Priory. My wife told me she had sent out to the farm bailiff to ask if he didn't think steps should be taken towards finding me, to which he replied, very wisely, that it would be no good, for if I had had any accident in crossing between the islands, I should at once have been blown straight across to Jura. I remarked not far back that during a very slight mishap we had with a horse and cart, one Archie was somewhat unnecessarily perturbed in his mind by the upset of the cart, and by suddenly finding himself heaved out into the road. I found on another occasion that the perils of the deep had no greater charm for him than those on shore. All round those rock-encircled islands when in a boat, one has to keep an eagle eye around for submerged reefs and take very great note of the breakers that are caused thereby, which suddenly rear up a crested head many feet and may break into your boat, and would inevitably swamp you. These breakers seem at times to rise up quite suddenly from an almost calm sea. I was once, when after duck and snipe, approaching a small island. Archie was rowing and we were waiting an opportunity to beach the boat safely.

Of an Old 'Un

Suddenly one of these breakers rose near us and, forming a crest, fell within very few feet of our boat. Poor Archie turned as white as a sheet, for no apparent reason, as we were close to the shore. I cheered him up a bit and told him it was quite all right, and that even had the wave come on board it couldn't have hurt us as we were so close to land. Archie looked at me cannily and then merely made the remark, "I canna soum."

Some slight description of that winter home of ours will not be amiss here. The house itself, Oransay Priory, was, at the time it was built, a hundred and fifty years ago or thereabouts, without doubt a most desirable abode and very possibly kept out a great deal of wind and rain, and during the summer I can well believe it was not only most delightful in every way, but moreover, to make use of the words of the house agents, "an eminently attractive and charmingly situated mansion." But when in the middle of winter a south-west gale was raging round the gables, when the rain was penetrating through the roof in places without number, and when the patches of wet on our bedroom ceilings, at first the size of pocket-handkerchiefs, gradually assumed the proportions of full-sized counterpanes and began to drip with much regularity on to whatever happened to be beneath, the "eminently



Sporting Recollections

attractive and delightful situation of the mansion," in the estimation of the ladies of the party at any rate, appeared to leave a great deal to be desired. Close by the house on the north stands the finest Iona cross that I ever saw, and near by the ruins of the ancient Priory, which are most interesting. There are many chambers, a chapel, a refectory, and many a relic of the dim and distant past. Stone coffins and sarcophagi on which here and there one could decipher a letter or two and perchance a number, but I was unable to distinguish any date. In a corner of the old chapel were reposing peacefully a few skulls and other remains of the ancient dead of past centuries. For not only was Oransay Priory the last resting-place of endless McNeills of ages ago, but also of many a saint and holy one who had passed away even before the time when St. Columba paid his fleeting visit to Oransay. On the north side of the Priory, and perhaps about half a mile off, stands a huge bluff three or four hundred feet high, having a nearly perpendicular side where it faces it. St. Columba having fled away from Ireland in wrath at the treatment meted out to him by the wicked inhabitants of that green island, came to the saintly people of Oransay, which no doubt originally derived its name from the holy Saint Oran, purposing to sojourn with them for the remainder of his days. But ascend-

Of an Old 'Un

ing one day to the top of the bluff—it was assuredly a clear day—there on the horizon far away past the shores of Islay, far away in the south-west he could distinguish the coast-line of the hated Ireland near Malin Head, though what it was called in the days of St. Columba the present historian deponeth not. Finding then that the detested land so lately quitted was still visible from his elected home, he would none of it, but shook off the pebbles of Oransay accumulated in his saintly sandals in disgust, took boat and passed forward in peace to the more blessed regions of Iona, where he lived, died and was buried and lies in the company of monarchs of Scotland, Ireland and Norway who on occasions according to traditions—firmly believed in, however, by the superstitious highlanders of those regions—

“. . . stalk forth with sovereign power
In pageant robes and wreathed with sheeny gold,
And on their twilight tombs aërial council hold.”

I remember reading many years ago a tale under the heading *The Mermaid of Oransay*. It was a very thrilling story, but its details have passed from my memory. The weird moaning of the seals heard by night around the island, particularly when more than usually stormy weather was approaching from the Atlantic,

Sporting Recollections

would indeed go far towards the making of legends, where the most imaginative superstition among the islanders runs in their very blood, and where almost every uncanny sound by night is woven by them into some mysterious and supernatural tale of the past. There were two kinds of seal always with us at Oransay, the common one (*Phoca vitulina*) in great numbers, and a few of the great grey fellow (*Halichærus gryphus*). There were always some of these on the reef that ran out towards Eilan-nan-Ron from the south point of the island. There was a very large and splendid old fellow that I knew well. Often have I rowed quietly and slowly to within fifteen yards of him, and stared him in his grim old face before he saw fit to roll off into the sea. He was far the largest seal I ever saw in this country. Long may he live and be the ancestor of unnumbered progeny. Of course we never shot any of the poor beasts. We had no quarrel with them and they seemed to know it, for sometimes they came close to our boat and stared at us with their beautiful great mild purple eyes. I think their moaning was the most weird and bewitching sound I ever heard. Many a time have I stood at the door of the Priory at night and listened to it as it came to my ears, rising and falling in the wind across the waves. Well might one fancy that such uncanny sounds could

Of an Old 'Un

only emanate from the drowned mariners who in the past years had been cast into the depths below, and from their hidden caverns were calling in vain for peace.

In the burying-place of the Priory I noticed the graves of one or two people that I had known in the long ago, who had been buried there comparatively lately. But I can think of no McNeills of modern days, with one exception, who have found their last earthly resting-place among the scores of ancestors who must have lain there for centuries and are still waiting for the trumpet call. The one exception was the last of the clan to own Colonsay, Oransay, Ard-lussa, and Gigha, John McNeill. He was carried to his rest across that island that I know so well from the yacht that bore him north, since we were there, and although I know the spot where he is lying so intimately, in all human probability I shall never look upon his grave. He was indeed a man. As brave a soldier as ever drew breath, a courteous gentleman and a cheery generous comrade. I trow indeed that "after life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

From the top of the high bluff behind the Priory, if you look, on a clear day, in almost the opposite direction to that in which St. Columba did when he saw the coast of Ireland for the last time, you will see, far away out in

Sporting Recollections

the Atlantic, a granite column rising above the waves. That column is the Dhu Heartach lighthouse, named after the rock on which it is built. That solitary rock is but eighty yards long by fifty broad. On a still day the Atlantic waves do nothing more offensive than send spray forty or fifty feet up the tower ; but, on the other hand, often and often during winter gales have I watched broken water in tons flying right over the top of the lighthouse, which is over one hundred and fifty feet above high-water mark. On the west there is nothing between the coast of America and Dhu Heartach, and it is surrounded on all sides by deep water, which accounts for the stupendous size and force of the waves from the Atlantic Ocean which in times of storm fall upon it. The absolute necessity for a lighthouse on Dhu Heartach had been very well known to the authorities for many years, but it had been found impossible to undertake the erection of one until the year 1867. To any one acquainted with these regions, the vast importance of a light at the position of Dhu Heartach, guarding as it does, to a very great extent, the navigation of the Minch, the entrance to the Irish Channel, and the Firth of Clyde, must be abundantly apparent. Previous to the erection of this light, there was a portion of this most frightfully dangerous and rocky

Of an Old 'Un

coast of nearly fifty miles, *i.e.* from the light-house of Skerryvore in the north to that of the Rhinns of Islay in the south without a light of any sort. Wrecks were, of course, in comparatively old days, of very constant occurrence, and the hardy vikings of those regions were in the habit of garnering a rich harvest of timber and wreckage that was strewn all too frequently along their inhospitable shores. If ancient records be true, the fierce islanders were not only exceedingly willing to accept everything thrown up from the sea, in the shape of flotsam and jetsam that came their way, but were, moreover, not averse to exposing misleading beacons and false signals in order to lead the unfortunate and unsuspecting mariners to their doom. During nearly the whole of the winter of 1902-3, that we spent at Oransay Priory, we were kept in firewood of the best description, in the shape of sawn pine beams that were cast ashore in thousands, evidently from a Norwegian vessel wrecked, God alone knew where or how! It must have been miles and miles away, for no sign of the vessel or of those who had sailed her ever appeared.

I was standing one day on the south point of Oransay, and about a mile away from me was a small rocky island called Eilan-nan-Ron with surf raging round it, for it was, as was usual,

Sporting Recollections

wild weather. Suddenly I saw, for the only time that winter, a vessel approaching from the west. As she came near I observed that she was almost battered to pieces, that her boats were all carried away, and that her masts were but remnants, and that on these she had a rag or two of sail set and was crawling along before the gale at, perchance, three or four miles an hour. She approached the island and appeared unable to steer away from it, and entered the breakers surrounding it. Now, it so happened that in a perfectly calm sea I had gone in a small boat a few days before to retrieve a wild goose that had fallen on the very spot where that ship was now passing. I should have deemed that it was utterly impossible for a brig of over a thousand tons—as this wretched vessel was—to have made her way unscathed through that labyrinth of rocks and broken water. Nevertheless she did it. She forged her way on and on through the breakers, while we—our whole party collected by that time—aghast and spell-bound watched her, expecting every moment to see her crash into the rocks and go to pieces, for indeed I well knew what merciless fangs of rocks she had within but few feet of her on every side. But no!—she went through everything without touching, and sailed into the open water beyond and safety. She made her

Of an Old 'Un

way to Scallasaig Bay, where she anchored. We ascertained afterwards that not only was she almost battered to fragments and very nearly out of provisions, but moreover that half the crew were down with typhoid, and that, last of all, there was not a soul among them who, when they had passed the perils of Eilan-nan-Ron, had any idea of where they had been, or who had ever sailed those waters before. In due course a tug came along from Glasgow and towed the poor battered hulk away.

The lighthouse of Dhu Heartach was commenced in 1867 and completed in 1873. That it took so long to erect will not be wondered at when the stupendous difficulties that had to be surmounted are taken into consideration. The base of operations was perforce many miles away—about fifteen—at Earraid on the Ross of Mull, and from this place every stone, every bit of iron, every bolt, had to be conveyed by steamer. Not infrequently it was found, on nearing the rock, that the sea was so wild that no approach was possible, and all the cargo had to be taken back to Earraid again. It will perchance somewhat surprise the reader to learn that during the late autumn months and the winter no work of any sort was possible—indeed even to land on the rock at all was out of the question. Even in the middle of summer the

Sporting Recollections

weather was not infrequently so wild that all work had to be suspended. During the whole of the year 1868 it was found possible to land on the rock on thirty-eight days only. A barrack was erected on the rock for the use of the workmen. This consisted of a large iron drum which was capable of housing, for sleeping purposes, fully a dozen men. This drum was erected on the top of an enormously strong malleable iron framework. Now it must not be forgotten that the top of this drum was seventy-seven feet above high-water mark. During the month of August 1868 an engineer and some artificers landed on the rock in calm weather to proceed with their work. This was on the 20th. A storm came on during the night, and those wretched men—fourteen of them—were closely imprisoned within the drum, sixteen feet only in diameter, until the 26th. Imagine it ! While they were thus imprisoned, during the height of the storm, and unable to descend to the rock even for a moment, heavy broken water frequently rose above the top of the barrack—seventy-seven feet above high-water mark, and, falling on it, wholly obscured all light for several seconds. While these things were going on over their heads, beneath them solid water was dashing through the framework that supported the barrack thirty-five to fifty-five feet above

Of an Old 'Un

high-water mark, and such was the force of the waves that the hatch in the floor of the barrack was burst up. What a truly awful situation ! And it must be remembered, at the same time, that not yet had the barrack and its supporting framework been *proved* by a storm and found trustworthy.

The solid masonry of the lighthouse itself, what we laymen would designate the foundation, rises to 64 feet 4 inches above high-water mark. Taking into consideration the awful power of the storms of even summer, this enormous height above sea level for constructing the entrance to the lighthouse was not deemed excessive, although compared to other and well known lighthouses it seems very great. For instance, the height of the solid masonry of the Eddystone is but 10 feet 3 inches ; of the Wolf 16 feet 4 inches ; of the Bishop in the Scillies 23 feet, and of Skerryvore, which although apparently situated in a position which is equally exposed to the roaring Atlantic billows as is Dhu Heartach, required a solid foundation of less than half its height. Men of science are of the opinion that the exceptionally heavy seas that rage around and over Dhu Heartach are caused by the formation of a submarine valley at the head of which the lighthouse stands. After a storm which came on during July 1869 a landing on the rock was in due

Sporting Recollections

course effected and it was then ascertained that fourteen stones weighing two tons each which had been firmly dovetailed into their positions with Portland cement had been carried away, and that eleven of them had been swept off the rock into deep water, and this at a height of over thirty-five feet above high-water mark. I could tell of many more catastrophes and accidents to masonry and machinery during the building of that lighthouse, which has without a shadow of doubt been the means of saving many a vessel and countless lives from a watery grave. But to the infinite credit of those concerned it should be stated that through all those years from 1867 to 1873, although surrounded by various and unnumbered perils of all sorts both by land and sea, there was not a single serious accident to life or limb. Even now that the work has been completed for many a long year and all has gone well, there are many dangers still for those who tend the light and who pass the greater part of their lives on that wild and desolate rock. The relieving keeper is taken every fortnight by steamer from Earraid and landed on the rock. But such is the exposed situation, and such almost without exception the wildness of the sea, that the steamer has to be anchored outside the surf and most cautiously backed in towards the rock until the men and provisions can be landed by means of a portable

Of an Old 'Un

derrick which is erected by the keepers on the rock.

I shall in all human probability never again look upon Dhu Heartach lighthouse, but the remembrance of it will never fade away. Whether I recall it as seen during a winter storm across the raging waste of Atlantic waves, with the wildly flying spray dashing far over its head, or whether I think of it as I so often welcomed its kindly beaming rays while wending my way across the hills towards home in the gloaming, I shall always in my heart have a kindly thought for Dhu Heartach, and for its surroundings of such infinite beauty and grandeur.

It will easily be gathered that wind, from the gentle zephyr, a very, very rare visitor, that on the occasional fine day graciously cooled the brow as one climbed the heights of Hangman's Hill after grouse, to the raging winter hurricane, was a very large, nay more ! an enormous factor during a winter in Oransay. There were many days when shooting was out of the question, when one could scarcely stand, and to traverse those rocky uneven hills, gun in hand, would be absolutely dangerous. I was coming home from shooting one evening on which a fierce gale had arisen. As I neared the Priory I was watching my wife, whom I had observed taking an airing

Sporting Recollections

(indeed it was an airing and a half), partly sheltered by an adjacent wall. But to gain the house she had to pass across an open space to reach another protecting wall. Across this space the wind blew in all its fury, but it was a fair wind, if indeed any such blustering brutality could be called fair, and wafted the poor pedestrian along most swiftly if not very gracefully for a few yards. Then the end came, and twenty yards short of the protecting haven she was blown down flat on her face and had ignominiously to crawl, a most sadly dishevelled wreck, into the harbour. I went as fast as I could to her assistance and we duly reached home. Now under such circumstances as these my heart literally bleeds for our poor dear women. They have nothing to say about it that can be of the very smallest comfort. "Oh dear," or some such rotten expletive is the best they can do, and I must candidly confess that such cotton wool as that wouldn't in any crisis be the very slightest use to even the very selvedge edge of *my* soul. I should indeed have very much liked to have been present, if my stalwart nephew S—M had ever happened to have been blown flat on his face like the above. Verily I trow the words that would have flowed from his usually chaste lips would have savoured rather of fire, brimstone and bitterness than any cotton

Of an Old 'Un

wool. I must acknowledge that I have been very near to him on several occasions when he has taken what I can only describe as the most infernal and imperial crowners to the very great detriment of himself, his rods and his reels, but then the woe has been too deep, altogether too deep, for any expletives, and had I dared I should have exclaimed in the words of Malcolm (not McNeill), " Give sorrow words : the grief that does not speak whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break " ; instead of which I have only been able to staunch the blood flowing from knees and knuckles, and gather up the fragments that remained of reel and rod.

I referred lately to Hangman's Hill. This was part of the shooting in the south of Colon-say that for the time being was ours. It was a rocky heather-clad hill rising about 500 feet above the level of the sea, and round its foot-hills it was fully five miles in circumference. Game of all sorts was to be found on it, pheasant and partridge, for at its base was a certain amount of arable land, black game, grouse and many woodcock, snipe and wild fowl. Could aught from a sportsman's point of view be more entrancing ? But it is more from the executioner's standpoint that I am regarding the hill just now, and at the same time an executioner with a hempen cord, rather than a double-barrel breech-

Sporting Recollections

loader. As you pass along the foot of the western side of the hill you can see, far above you, jutting out from the top of a sheer precipice, a flat rock. From a certain point on careful inspection you will be able to distinguish a hole in this rock through which the sky is visible. Through that hole in days long gone by—very long let us hope—the wild and ferocious inhabitants of Colonsay and Oransay, and other islands too for aught I know, used to carry out their death sentences. I wonder how many centuries have elapsed since the gallant clan McNeill escorted a batch of their foes, after a vendetta with some other clan, up to Hangman's rock and precipitated them then one by one into eternity. It would matter little whether there was a rope round their necks or not, for there was a drop of fully 200 feet on to a mass of rugged rocks at the bottom. Many a time have I stood on that flat rock-gallows with the rope hole at my feet, many a time have I sat in the heather on the braeside above it, and have pondered on the past. It was not difficult to people the hill with a troop of rugged highlanders, claymore in hand, or to picture the band of prisoners, dour and stern after the manner of their kind, with arms bound behind them, so soon to be launched from that beetling crag.

CHAPTER V

Shooting in distant lands—Ignorance of the ordinary colonist as to sport and natural history—Guinea-fowl—Spiny-tailed ducks—Madagascar goose—Sand-grouse and their habits—Snipe the “Spookbird”—A day after snipe at Noneye’s Vley—Another Mistress Gilpin of frugal mind—Quail—A very long and tough journey by a man, and the Lord was on his side—Another by a woman when He wasn’t—East London in Cape Colony—And a little description of a sleeping chamber for a lady.

As a very great part of my life has been passed abroad it is not wonderful that I have had shooting of most varied descriptions in many distant lands, but chiefly at the Cape of Good Hope and its surrounding dependencies. There I not only had time for much shooting, but also ample leisure for studying the natural history of the country and the habits of all the living things in which I took delight. I think the first thing that strikes one at the Cape is the almost universal ignorance of ninety-nine out of every hundred persons who go forth for the pursuit of game, as to the habits and even as to the names of the creatures they are after. When I first took up my residence in the Cape Colony I sat at the feet of a certain Gamaliel who was not nearly so ignorant as most of the

Sporting Recollections

inhabitants, and gathered a great deal of information from him. But as time went on and my searching after natural history lore went deeper, as I was able to procure books and study them, I ascertained that three-quarters of what I had been told was wrong. For instance, there is a bird called the Namaqua *partridge*. It is not a partridge at all, but a sand-grouse. They have a bird they call a teal, and as such it was introduced to me. So far from being a teal, it was not even a duck, but a goose (*Nettapus madagascariensis*), and a most lovely little fellow it was, with a flight like lightning.

I found after a time that on a certain lake about twenty miles from my home there was a species of duck that I had seen nowhere else. No one seemed to know anything about it or had ever shot one. The lake was surrounded by a broad belt of high reeds, far higher than one's head, which grew in water and bottomless mud. And there was no boat of any sort nearer than the Knysna harbour about twenty miles away. There was nothing for it but to procure a boat, and this I did at some trouble and expense, and it was duly brought along on a bullock wagon. I could do nothing at the time of its arrival, for I was very busy the whole day long skinning a white-tailed eagle

Of an Old 'Un

(*Haliætus vocifer*) which I happened to have stalked and shot *en route*, and my word ! how that brute did stink. He is somewhere or other in England now, and I trust in Heaven he is a little less odoriferous than he was that day, or the visitors to the Museum where he is now sitting will be few and far between.

The next day I launched my craft and approached the unknown ducks. There were plenty of them, and they let the boat come within easy shot, but quicker divers I never saw. They were as smart as any bird I ever shot at, be it what you will, grebe, scoter, or any other amphibious brute. But of course I got some in due course, and they turned out to be spiny-tailed duck (*Erismatura maccoa*). There appeared to be not a soul in the district who had ever seen one of them, or even knew they existed. Leopold Layard apparently did not know of this lake, called Groen Vley, or of these ducks that had their dwelling-place on its waters.

In Bechuanaland there are in places untold numbers of sand-grouse of three species. In that desert country they fly miles and miles to drink at some desert pool, sometimes in thousands. A man told me that he once let drive into a flock that had settled on the edge of a pool and killed two large pailfuls, and that man was a missionary. So of course it *must* be true. Yes !

Sporting Recollections

Of these three species, two, *i. e.* *Pterocles tachypterus* and *Pterocles variegatus*, come down to drink in the morning about eight or nine o'clock unfailingly, and *never* in the evening. The third kind, *Pterocles bicinctus*, drinks in the evening only, just when night is coming on, and in the morning never. Now, when I lived in Bechuanaland I never came across a soul, not even a missionary, who had ever noticed this evening-drinking bird, or even knew it apart from the other morning-drinking fellows, in spite of its peculiar markings. If any close observer of the habits of birds is prepared to differ from me on these points I shall be only too delighted to touch my hat and take a lesson. But I am not inclined to gather information from the casual colonist, or even from the missionary who shot two pailfuls of sand-grouse at a shot. I shouldn't wonder, if that missionary still lives (and he seemed a pretty hearty upstanding old liar), if his shot hadn't produced two wagon-loads by this time.

I have at times in various parts of Bechuanaland shot a great many guinea-fowl. They are, when one can succeed—a rare occurrence—in getting them decently cooked, by no means bad eating. But they are most eminently uninteresting birds to shoot. They always run away from you if they can. But one can

Of an Old 'Un

sometimes run them into thick scrub where they lie like stones. Then if you have a good dog he will nose them out, and you will get many shots of an exceedingly simple nature such as would be given you by shooting at a miniature fire balloon with the words, "God save our good Squire" painted on it, and sent up into space at a village festival. I have once and only once found guinea-fowl worth shooting at. It was at a place called Tsining in Bechuanaland. I had a mate with me, and we were pursuing a very large flock of the birds across some rough veldt. My mate was a desperate slow mover, and the farther we walked the farther the guinea-fowl got ahead of us. I told him that I should run, and that he could potter on after me at his leisure. I ran for about a mile and saw nothing; for we had already lost sight of the birds when I started. So I sat me down on a rock and waited for my companion. It appeared that I had run right through the birds, for as my mate came strolling on with his dog he got right in among them and kept flushing them two or three at a time, or singly, and many came past me well within shot and at a decent height and pace. I got about fifteen, and that I honestly believe is the one and only occasion on which I derived the very slightest satisfaction from shooting guinea-fowl.

Sporting Recollections

I have done a certain amount of shooting in the Argentine Republic, but I had no books and no preceptor who knew a single thing about the birds of the country, and as the Gauchos were unable to lasso birds or even, with the exception of rheas, to circumvent them with their bolas, they took no interest in them and could give one no information whatever. I shot a great many duck, a few geese, a swan or two (with a rifle), and heaps of snipe. I fancy the snipe were *Nigripennis*, but I honestly don't know. Then there were fast-flying birds that they called partridges, very like a glorified quail, and slow-flying lumbering brutes that lived chiefly among the old Indian cornfields that they called pheasants, but which I suspect were Tinamou. But in writing of these things I acknowledge my hopeless ignorance, and plead guilty at once to feeling like old Tennyson's "infant crying in the night, and with no language but a cry."

Most assuredly the shooting that I loved best at the Cape of Good Hope was snipe. The partridge (Francolin) shooting was amusing, and led one through the most exquisite country in and among the foothills of the Outeniqua Mountains. Moreover, my beloved Rab was in those days still with me, and I would contentedly have gone out shooting monkeys if only I could have that dear dog at my side. But snipe-shooting

Of an Old 'Un

was the best of all. When I first dwelt in that country I was informed that the ordinary snipe was exactly the same as the English bird. Of course, I very soon ascertained that it was not, but that it was the Blackwing (*Gallinago æquatorialis*). The black-winged snipe at the Cape is called by the Africanders "the Spook-bird." I presume this arises from its occasional habit of "drumming" at night. I must acknowledge that when I have been riding along in solitude across the rolling wastes of Kafirland that weird noise as it rose and fell suddenly over my head possessed very ghost-like qualities. Had I not known exceedingly well what made it I honestly think I should have been startled, and should possibly have felt somewhat inclined to look up among the stars for some uncanny apparition. The common British Snipe (*Gallinago cœlestis*), as we all know well, makes the same drumming noise. Indeed in the Test Valley, where the snipe have their nests in scores during the springtime, I have often watched the birds making their magnificent flights, which cause the noise, two or three at a time ! But I have never heard their drumming in England during the hours of darkness, although I have walked over the whole of South Hampshire at every hour of the night and at all seasons of the year times without number. Then there were

Sporting Recollections

the Golden Snipe and the Painted Snipe, two separate species as I was told. Of course, in reality they were the same bird, male and female (*Khynchcea capensis*). I was not told of the "Solitary" until I had been at the Cape many years. I heard of it at East London: went there, saw, and shot several. Afterwards in the Transkei we saw them frequently, and my two sons on one occasion got fourteen "Solitaries" in the day, besides a whole lot of others, in a marsh formed by the river Qwaninga, about twenty miles from our home. It was wonderful in that country the manner in which the snipe followed the rain. As long as it was dry there wasn't a snipe to be seen, but directly there was rain enough to make the land about the heads of the rivers marshy, along came the snipe, sometimes in numbers. Our bags were usually from thirty to fifty, and these were generally made within twenty miles of home. I was once on my way to a distant magistracy to do some work, and saw, about sixty miles from home, a most seductive-looking marsh. I made inquiries and found out that it was called Noneye's Vley, and that at times it held many snipe. I even took the trouble to walk a little way into it, and to my joy put up several snipe. "All right! All right!" I said to myself, and to the snipe, "My little dears, I'll come and call on

Of an Old 'Un

you again very shortly." Therefore, but very few days afterwards, one of my boys and I set off and got more than half-way to Noneye's Vley by sundown, and put up for the night at a brother "Beak's." We were off again before daylight, and reached the Vley in most excellent time and had a most delightful day. We got over sixty snipe and a few quail, and flying about over the marsh most of the day was one of those exquisite egrets (*Ardea garzetta*). Oh no! we didn't shoot the poor lovely beast, in spite of his osprey plumes. Why in the name of all foolishness *osprey*? We had some lunch that day, or rather we *brought* some. I am not likely to forget that lunch! The evening before our hostess, who, like Mistress John Gilpin, had a very frugal mind, had inquired if we would take some lunch with us. We replied that we would be grateful, and that *anything would do*. Mrs. Gilpin took us at our word. There was a very small parcel on the hall table in the morning, which we chucked into one of our orderly's wallets and departed. When we opened that paper parcel in the middle of the day we found it contained a small chunk of bread. Bravo, Mrs. Gilpin! Man cannot live by bread alone, so we chucked it to dear Hettie, our retriever, who didn't seem to think very much of it. That wasn't the only time I had suffered semi-starvation at the hands

Sporting Recollections

of Mrs. Gilpin. We finished our shoot, and I am sure that what snipe we left behind us that day in Noneye's Vley were uncommonly few and far between. When we sat down to supper that night we had been fully twenty-four hours without a mouthful of food, had ridden over fifty miles, and had enjoyed most thoroughly an excellent day's shooting. It was, of course, nothing for me, for I was acclimatized, and was, moreover, like Thackeray's "gorging Jack and guzzling Jimmy" in the immortal ballad, old and tough. But it was an uncommonly hard day for the boy, who was only seventeen or eighteen, and who, as far as I could see, was neither weary nor sorrowful.

The quail-shooting around our house in the Transkei was superb when it was a good season and quail were *in*. The food that attracted them was the seed of the Watsonia. At times quail came in in thousands, and when we had a party, or my sons, with us we enjoyed quail-shooting to the utmost, and made very large bags. When I was alone, however, which was usually the case, I hardly ever molested them. But on one occasion they were "*in*" in such numbers that I thought that, just for once, I would see what I could do. I was in my office for a short time in the morning, and then started. I came in again some time before lunch with 188. I was deadly

Of an Old 'Un

sick of it and shot no more that day. I am perfectly certain that I could, had I wished, have got 500 in the day quite easily.

About the same time I had suddenly to undertake a journey of nearly 850 miles, *i.e.* from my home in the Transkei to a place in the district of George. It must not be forgotten that this journey took place more than thirty years ago, when the means of locomotion at the Cape of Good Hope were very different from those existing to-day. At breakfast-time one morning a telegram was handed to me which ran as follows : "If possible come at once, attack of hemorrhage, Walter." I sent back a wire, "Am on the road, Frank." The telegraph office was forty miles away, but it was on my way west.

I ought to explain that my eldest brother, the one with whom I had sojourned years before at Ardlussa, who was, alas ! at the time of which I am writing, suffering from consumption, and had already survived more than one dangerous attack of hemorrhage, had been ordered to the Cape, and was staying with our old friends the Walter Dumbletons, who had in the first instance welcomed me and mine to the Colony.

Within ten minutes of receiving the message, having slipped on a riding kit, I was in the saddle and away. I rode, with frequent change of horses, something over fifty miles to a roadside

Sporting Recollections

hostel, where I was able to hire a Cape cart with two good horses. With these I made some five-and-twenty miles more, and found myself at a place called Draibosch, nearly twenty miles from Kei Road railway station. It was by this time nearly ten at night, was raining in torrents, and pitch dark. Could they let me have a horse? Woe is me, they could not. What few horses they had were all away out on the veldt, and for all they knew might be miles off. In that inky blackness it was of course utterly impossible to find them. There was nothing for it but "Shanks his mare." I was in tiptop training and had less than twenty miles to go, and six hours in which to do it, to catch a train which I knew ran at four o'clock the next morning. Sounds quite easy, doesn't it? But had you known that road and that country, and not forgotten the intense darkness of the night, you would have thought otherwise. I dreaded most exceedingly losing the track, and I well knew that once lost it was any odds against finding it again. I don't think I ever felt the want of a star or two to guide me as badly as I did that night. I lost the track once, and only once, I am thankful to say. But indeed the few minutes that elapsed before I found out where I was seemed hours. I *thought* I knew where I was, but could not feel sure

Of an Old 'Un

But I remembered a certain ditch, the boundary of a farm that I knew, that if I had my bearings correctly should be within two or three hundred yards of me. If I could not find it I must sit down and wait till daylight. That would mean missing the train, and the mail cart to Graham's Town, and the train again to Algoa Bay, and the weekly Cape mail steamer, and lose me best part of a week. It was awful. With these thoughts in my brain, and in the pitiless deluge of rain, I moved slowly forward. On and yet on until hope almost died. I thought of my poor brother with the shadow of death hovering so near. Should I ever reach his bedside in time to press his hand once more? On and still on in the darkness. O, Heaven be praised! A stumble and a real good bump, and I found myself sprawling at the bottom of the ditch. Surely never was mortal man dying of thirst so thankful to stoop down to a cooling stream as I was to take that toss into that most merciful ditch. After that all was well, for I soon got my bearings and the track was easily regained. In due course I saw the lights of the station, and caught my train with a few minutes in hand. An hour or so later I was seated in the mail cart in King William's Town, and started on my eighty-six (I think) mile drive to Graham's Town. There I caught the night

Sporting Recollections

mail train to Algoa Bay, and went straight to Messrs. Donald Currie's shipping office. Now the big mail steamers very seldom indeed called at a rotten little place named Mossel Bay, which, it being only about fifty miles from Oakhurst, the Dumbletons' place, was the haven I sought. Could they possibly give orders for the steamer to land me there next morning? Utterly impossible! They were most kind and polite, but said it was out of the question. I said that if it was merely a matter of expense I would gladly pay £50 for the accommodation. "Is it a case of life or death, Mr. Streatfeild?" they asked. It must not be forgotten that we were pretty well known travellers on both the Donald Currie and Union lines. "Yes! on my honour it is!" was my reply, and I explained matters. "Then," said the manager with a smile, "we won't touch your fifty pounds, sir, but we'll do it for nothing." Now wasn't he a real lady? I then proceeded to lay a dâk, as they call it elsewhere, by wire, and went on board. When we reached Mossel Bay next morning I found a Cape cart waiting for me on the jetty, another half way to George, where was yet another, and we rattled off that fifty miles in quicker time, I fancy, than it was ever done before. I reached Oakhurst in exactly seventy-nine hours from the time I had left home, and was not in the very smallest

Of an Old 'Un

degree tired, although I had had scarcely a wink of sleep, for I had, as usual, been deadly sick while on the sea, and hadn't had my clothes off at all. I was anyhow dry again, and that was something. When I entered the train at Kei Road station, I was just as wet as if I had spent the night at the bottom of a pond. Walter Dumbleton met me at the door, and his first words were "You haven't come in answer to my message, have you? it's impossible." It took him some time to believe it, for indeed it was a wonderful concatenation of most exceptional circumstances that had enabled me to accomplish in very little over three days what usually took a solid week. I found my brother much better, and he was able to talk to me in a whisper for a few minutes. The smile of welcome that his wife gave me, dear loving woman, was ample repayment for the journey. I stayed with them for many weeks, indeed until he was well enough to travel, and then we took him very, very carefully by gentle stages down to Mossel Bay and Cape Town, whence I saw him off to England. And now for the description of yet another journey, but not by me this time. This little episode is addressed to ladies to show how bravely and manfully one of their dear sex can overcome difficulties and put up with many horrible

Sporting Recollections

vicissitudes, when, poor things, they are following their wretched husbands who happen to be Government Officials in distant and degraded lands.

When I ascertained that in looking after my brother I should be absent from home for many weeks, I made arrangements for my wife to pay some visits with friends in the regions of Cape Town, and sent a message to her at once to leave our distant home in the wilds, make the best of her way down to the coast at East London, a place very well-known at Lloyd's for its dangers to shipping, for its Bar—not a drinking one, a watery one—which was not infrequently impassable for weeks together, and for many other exceedingly disagreeable things, and take ship for Cape Town. Among these disagreeable things, on one occasion, a box of my wife's was broken open during the night in the lock-up of the landing-stage, and several hundred pounds' worth of jewellery stolen. I take the liberty of cribbing from a book, written at the time of which I am writing, a few words about that horrible place, East London, which depicts it thus : “ Reader, have you ever visited East London ? For your own sake, I trust not. Do you purpose ever doing so ? Let me implore you to postpone your visit *sine die*. Let me assure you it is impossible to be in East London

Of an Old 'Un

without a feeling of intense gloom and depression coming over you, and that you will never recall the time of your sojourn there without stimulants at once suggesting themselves to your mind."

To this dirty hole, then, did that poor woman, my wife, have to make her way, alone and unaided, nearly a hundred miles to Kei Road railway station, and from there by train down to the coast. In the regions of the Transkei there are no forwarding agencies, and nothing whatever in the shape of a Carter Paterson or Pickford. It would be an easy matter to place a card in your window, *i. e.* if you were lucky enough to possess a house to hold a window in its walls (as a matter of fact we had no house at the time, and only a row of Kafir huts in which we dwelt); but there that card might remain unseen until the blast of the trumpet at the day of judgment shook it to the ground.

A sleigh, drawn by two or more bullocks, was requisitioned for the transport of my wife's portmanteaux to Kei Road. A sleigh is merely the fork of a tree aptly chosen for the purpose, cut to the right dimensions by deft hands. Across the fork are nailed a few spleats, and into holes drilled in the fork are inserted a few uprights. Through these are woven withes up to a height of three feet, and you have your means of transport complete. With this vehicle it is

Sporting Recollections

perfectly marvellous what can be accomplished. One can convey goods across exceedingly rough country, up and down rocky kloofs, and through rivers ; but in crossing rivers your goods are taken over on men's shoulders, and the sleigh swashes after the oxen at its own wild will. On such a conveyance, then, did my wife see her things depart for a visit of at least two months into the heart of civilization, I mean Cape civilization. (All right, Herbert! We weren't going to visit you, although we did have the luck to see a good deal of a very strong and very charming man and his family, who was your predecessor in the past, and whose heart your father broke a little later on.) O, ye dear sweet damsels, and stately matrons, whom I love and reverence so greatly, how would you like to see your beloved belongings, your silks and satins, your frillies and furbelows, to say nothing of the fragile fabrics of your hats and other frail (I mean nothing) appurtenances, chucked into the above-described vehicle, anon to disappear from your own gently ministering hands and sorrowful gaze for many days, to be cared for only by two or three almost naked black heathens, to whom the very idea of a Paris bonnet or an Ascot frock would be on a par with handing a *pêche Melba* on a golden dish to a duck-billed platypus ? Such was the beginning of that journey.

Of an Old 'Un

Next day my wife followed on horseback, with a couple of orderlies for a seventy mile ride, a twenty-five mile drive, and then three hours' train, *aven* would be a better and more appropriate word. Luck was not on the poor woman's side. The day before her start our best two horses returned from a long journey of one hundred and eighty miles, that they had taken with one of our boys going back to school. They were both wofully tired, and my wife's dear beast, a lovely grey mare and fleet as the wind, had shown us only too plainly that her lungs had gone wrong and that consumption was coming on. Of course she could not be ridden. As a matter of fact she was never ridden again. She was allowed, dear gentle creature that she was, to wander about at her own sweet will ; but she gradually got worse until the end. She used to come to the windows and put her head in and talk to us, and implore us with her lovely eyes to do something to help her. But all we could do was gently to sponge the trickle of blood from her nostrils and tell her how we grieved for her. Then the end came, for we saw the poor dear was suffering. So one morning I took a rifle and led her away. I dared not trust any one else to do it. So with one tired horse that poor woman started.

It has been my lot, times without number, to

Sporting Recollections

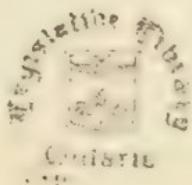
ride that seventy-mile journey that was before her, under every imaginable circumstance; indeed I have—for purposes of preserving my figure (ladies will sympathize, I know)—often walked it, but nothing can exceed the misery, the down-right misery, of riding mile after mile in broiling heat along that dusty track where, absolutely and truly, for many miles the only shade was that thrown by the telegraph poles that carried the wire from the Cape to Natal. She spent two nights on the road for poor Bob's sake, for she said it made her heart bleed to keep him going even at a foot's pace; for a woman can't get off and walk as we men can to ease her poor "gee." At last she got to the end, to a place called Komgha, and found a cart really ready for her, to her intense relief. You others will sympathize. Then came the three or four hours' drive; then three hours' train, and then East London. Not a soul to welcome the poor tired creature, not a smile to greet her as she alighted from the train, not even a friendly porter to say "By your leave!" or "D——!" Well! the other thing. She says she would have been only too thankful to be just sworn at, if only the voice of the swearer had been friendly.

She had recovered her luggage at the Kei Road station, for the sleigh and its attendant

Of an Old 'Un

satellites had been faithful. This deposited, she sallied forth, tired out, half dead with heat and fatigue, and not unnaturally with a splitting headache, to find a bed for the night. And . . . and . . . and there was a race-meeting on in East London. Need I say more? To those who have seen a colonial race-meeting in a thirteenth-class Cape Colony town I need say nothing. They know! To those who have not, no words of mine that my kind and not *too* particular Publisher would allow to be printed could possibly convey a vestige of the truth. Hell itself, broken loose, would be a Methodist conventicle compared to a race-meeting in those days at East London. Under such circumstances forth went my wife to find some place where she would fain lay her aching head for the night.

The first hotel that she went to, where we were well known, and had often stayed, was full from floor to ceiling. Even the billiard table, and the floor under it, were engaged knee-deep. The manager said there was not a single spare bed to be had in the whole town at *any price*. In spite of this, that wretched, tired-out creature called at all the hotels and a lodging-house or two, but in vain. Then she returned to Hotel No. 1, sought the manager, and threw herself on his mercy. After an interview with one of the



Sporting Recollections

waiters, and a certain amount of bribery, this knight of the napkin was induced to give up his chamber for the night. My wife tells me that when she entered that chamber and looked round, she very nearly burst into tears ; and that, had she not been so deadly tired, she would have fled. It was an awful scene. The crockery was all broken and dirty, soiled linen and shiny black clothes were hanging on surrounding pegs, and the bed . . . but here we draw the line. When she was left alone she locked the door, looked round with a gasp, and, without undressing, shut her eyes and cast her poor worn-out body on that awful bed, and her aching head on that loathly pillow. Think of it ! you who have never known what it was to lie on anything but the snowiest of sheets, and the softest and sweetest of pillows, perchance even—

“ . . . In the perfumed chambers of the great
Under the canopies of lofty state
And lulled with sounds of sweetest melody.”

Times without number have I watched that dear creature sleeping like a lamb on the lap of Mother Earth, and at times wet to the skin, with her face protected from the dripping rain by a sunshade stuck in the ground beside her ; but never in her life, as she assures me, had she felt any annoyance or been in the smallest degree

Of an Old 'Un

incommodeed by her sleeping quarters until she found herself in that degraded den of the waiter, and with her head on his disgusting pillow. Oh, the comfort next day of finding herself in a nice bright clean and sweet cabin in one of the Cape liners, and dancing along over the shining waves towards Agulhas.

CHAPTER VI

Cricket—My first match—Poor “Snivy,” in other words Edward McNiven—Alfred Lubbock—one Jumbo—Neville Lubbock and Fred Norman, point and lob bowler—The village grocer and six bottles of “fizz”—The cricket company—Old Samuel Gurney the Quaker—The “Butterflies” at The Mote, and an umpire—A bellyful of bowling at Rickling Green and H. E. Bull, a *Harlequin*, plays for the Quidnuncs and scores over a hundred—The Authentics at the King’s Arms, Westerham—The Old’ Un’s week—A Streatfeild eleven—Dear lovely Pusey—Kent cricket in olden days.

IN looking through a very long, but by no means dim, vista of the past, what innumerable scenes connected with cricket come before me. What endless friendships we made, many of which, alas ! were terminated by the grim king years ago, while many, owing to our paths taking us along devious ways through life, and perchance far apart in the world, died a natural death. “*Horas non numero nisi serenas,*” as the sundial remarked to Phœbus, when the clouds collected. I have not the smallest intention of referring to anything connected with cricket that was unpleasant, nor to any people who were disagreeable. *Cui bono?* The first match in which I remember playing was in 1857, and it

Sporting Recollections

was Westerham against Edenbridge. Poor Ted McNiven, nicknamed "Snivvy," was our skipper, and there were many playing on both sides who were, or became, well known to fame. I think McNiven was the strongest man I ever had to deal with. On one occasion, not very long before his death, when I was a very well developed boy of about fifteen, I was shooting with him at Perrysfield, his home near Oxted. I fell across a ditch, with my gun in my right hand, and with my feet on one side and my left hand on the other, and could not move without getting into the water. I called to "Mac," who was close by. He came, and, with the words "You poor little beggar," stooped down, and with one hand took me by the seat of my breeches and lifted me up as easily as if I'd been a rabbit, and put me on my feet again. I feel sure my old friend Phil Norman will forgive me for cribbing a few lines about poor old "Snivvy" from his most excellent book, *Annals of the West Kent Cricket Club*, in which book, by the same token, he most kindly wrote some very pretty things about this present scribe.

"Edward McNiven, a magnificent hitter, was this year (1845) Captain of the Eton Eleven. He was afterwards in the Cambridge Eleven, and according to Lillywhite in the Cambridge Eight, but I do not find that he rowed against

Sporting Recollections

Oxford. In 1851 he played for the Gentlemen against the Players. Once in a match against the Artillery at Woolwich he hit three successive balls, an eight, a six and a four, all to square leg, Calvert fielding. He was killed by a fall from his dog-cart while driving near Westerham in 1858. McNiven took a leading part in the Town and Gown row immortalized in the *Punch* parody of Macaulay's Lay called 'The Fight for the Crescent,' a lay of modern Cambridge, where he figures as 'Fitzwiggins'—

“ Fitzwiggins floored fierce Freestone,
Tom Noddy levelled Hobbs,
And cheerful Merrypebbles
Blacked both the eyes of Dobbs ;
And the aggravated Townsmen
Stared all appalled to see
On the flags the unconscious peelers,
In the Pass the dauntless three.”

I well remember hearing that when "Mac" was at Cambridge Nat Langham was very loath ever to put on the gloves with him; for, said the wily Nat: "No! Mr. McNiven, 'e don't 'it me often, but if 'e do 'it me, you see I'm mostly in bed for best part of a week." I can well believe it. At the same time he was the gentlest and most absolutely sweet-tempered of men, and was intensely beloved by every soul, rich and poor alike, through the whole country-side. As I pass by his grave in Oxted Churchyard, I still

Of an Old 'Un

heave a sigh when I think of that magnificent man and gentle, kind-hearted being, cut down in the very flower of his manhood, for he was only thirty, through a rotten, silly, unnecessary accident. He had been shooting pigeons on Godstone Green, and on going away saw fit, as he stood up in his dog-cart, to drive over a bank and ditch. He was shot out over the back and fell head first on to a stone which cut a hole in the back of his head in which you could have laid a small rat. As they picked him up he said with a laugh : "My old head will stand many such a crack as this." But it didn't. He lapsed into unconsciousness as they carried him into the little "pub" close by, and never spoke another coherent word. In the summer of 1858 Hugh Smith Barry—the present Lord Barrymore—and I were keepers of Sixpenny, the Lower Boy Club, at Eton. One of the brightest and best of our Eleven was dear old Alfred Lubbock. He and I were in the same division, and usually I fear rather nearer the bottom of it than the top, and used to be together a great deal wet-bobbing and dry-bobbing, and formed a friendship which still lasts, although he lives in the far West of England, while I dwell in the East ; I left Eton quite young, while he remained and won honour and great glory on the tented field, and developed into one of the

Sporting Recollections

very finest cricketers in England, and I venture to say the most graceful bat of his time. I always thought old Alfred was one of the most charming men I ever knew, and as an athlete and exceptionally graceful and upstanding of men I scarcely ever, if indeed ever, saw his equal. And I think, above all, stood out in bold relief the fact that he never for one instant put on one shred of side. BUT (big "But," please, Mr. Printer) he was the most disagreeable brute I ever knew in my life when he was on the opposite side and I had to bowl at him. I am thankful to say we were usually on the same. In 1862 the Eton Ramblers came into being, and poor Steenie Cleasby and Alfred were good enough to make me a member at once, and I played for them intermittently for many years. I knew all the eight Lubbock brethren well, was at Eton with five of them, and was great friends with some, and fag for one. I once played with John Lubbock, now Lord Avebury, in the year 1860. Like my friend Lord Harris on another occasion and with a very different man, G. M. Kelson, that very fine old Kent cricketer, I most vividly remember the red uppers of John Lubbock's cricket shoes at the match in question. He was skipper for West Kent, for which club I played very frequently a few years later. I have indeed had the honour of playing on several occasions

Of an Old 'Un

with old Herbert Jenner (Jenner-Fust) and was at Eton with his son. In the 'sixties I played a great deal for the old Sevenoaks Vine in the days when "Deb" Monson used to manage it so excellently well, indeed far better in my humble opinion than it has ever been managed by any one else. In his day we played just the very best clubs, Household Brigade, Gunners, Sappers, I Z, Quidnuncs, Harlequins, etc., and most delightful games we had. Ah me ! what a phalanx of names comes to me as I write from the past, and how few yet remain ! And their grandchildren now wield the willow where we bore our part, let us hope *non sine gloriâ*, half a century ago. My kind friends were good enough to let me go on playing cricket, and even go so far as to give me a hearty welcome, long after I had, as I fear, ceased to be any good, and when my years had well exceeded the half-century. If, however, I was but little good in the cricket field, I venture to hope I was not altogether useless in the house when the fun waxed fast and furious. I have a vivid remembrance of sundry cricket weeks, and perfectly gorgeous fun that ensued thereat. I remember at a certain Kentish mansion one Jumbo (Peace, Jumbo ! Shake !) saw fit one night to go to bed early, and not only to go to bed early, but moreover to lock his door after him ; for he was tired, poor dear little fellow !

Sporting Recollections

The locked door was an offence that cried aloud to heaven. What was to be done? Now, it so happened that around that Kentish mansion, some fifty or sixty feet from the ground, ran a parapet a foot or so broad under the top windows, the windows of the bachelors' rooms, among which was that of the gentle Jumbo. What easier? I called unto me one S—M who has, I think, appeared elsewhere in these pages, and who in those days, exactly twenty-five years ago, was precisely twenty-five years wilder than he is now, and together we stole our way very slowly and safely along that parapet. We came to a window and felt sure it was the gentle Jumbo's. So I wrapped a handkerchief round my fist and let go through the window. Instead of, as I expected, encountering nothing but the pure air of Jumbo's chamber, my fist came very hard against a board at the back of a dummy window that we had clean forgotten. No matter! We very soon found the right one, jammed a hole through it, undid the latch, scrambled into the room, and had the gentle Jumbo out of bed and on to the floor before he knew whether he was awake or otherwise. Then ensued a deadly fray. It appears to me now that the disbedded one was somewhat cross, but in this I am quite prepared to admit that I am probably wrong, for dear Jumbo is the sweetest-tempered of

Of an Old 'Un

mortals, although during what ensued in the far from silent watches of that eventful night he proved himself most fiercely aggressive. He flew at me like a lion—tiger if you like it better—and with one fell blow laid me flat on the floor. But woe is me, ere ever I reached Mother Earth, mother carpet I mean, there intervened something most woefully hard. It was the coal-scuttle, and there is on my person—(no details, please, Publisher)—a counterfeit presentment of that coal-scuttle indelibly impressed for evermore. Dear, gentle Jumbo, I love you still ! Early next morning some very foolish and ill-advised young men of the party having carefully examined the parapet asserted that had we not been "tight" we should not have paid that nocturnal visit by such an exalted path to Jumbo's chamber. So, just to show that they were wrong, and that at the same time there was no ill-feeling, I danced merrily along the self-same path in my night-shirt. On yet another occasion, same establishment late at night, one Joey came to me with tears in his eyes : "I say, old man, I'm awfully tired. What's the best way to secure peace from you ragging devils ?" " Go to bed, Joey, my child, and leave your door wide open, and not a soul will cross your threshold." Yes ! there is still honour among thieves, thieves of a certain sort I mean, not including some

Sporting Recollections

newly made peers, card-sharpers, welshers, haberdashers, and company promoters. I interviewed Joey in the morning, and he assured me that his slumbers had been unusually peaceful and that no ill dreams or evildoers had disturbed his rest.

Since the days of Helen of Troy there has generally been a woman at the bottom of every strife. It was so on *this* the following particular occasion. We were a party of four in a carriage on the G.W.R. Joey, two darlings, and myself. Said one of the darlings, the more mischievous one : "I should like to see you two boys try if one can put the other up into the net." So we tried. It was a pretty gorgeous rag : but as we were all on our way to a water party, and were "flannelled fools" for the occasion and "muddied oafs" later on, please, what cared we ? Joey was much the bigger man, and probably stronger than I was, but no stayer, and not a quarter as hard. There was a fierce fray, and we were for a few minutes all over the carriage, but at length poor old Joey was clean blown and done for and cried "Pax !" and I easily got him up into the net, where he was more than content to lie quiet and grunt. I don't remember that the victor was presented with any laurel wreath though on that particular occasion.

Of an Old 'Un

A very charming country cricket match that I can recall that took place about fifty years ago was Westerham, a very strong club in those days, against Sevenoaks Vine, which was at that time managed by Capt. Saunders. We had in our team some most valuable assistance in the shape of a few Normans and Lubbocks from the West Kent Club, while the Vine had several players whose names on the cricket field are among the immortals—Rashleighs, Fields, Kelson, Rogers, and others. On our side was a very fatal—fatal that is to the other—combination formed by Fred Norman bowling lobs and Neville Lubbock at point picking them off the bat as a street Arab picks out winkles with a pin. Lubbock fairly surpassed himself that day. When the bowler started for his run, Point was standing decently seven or eight yards away ; but when the ball reached the batsman I don't think he was ever more than a few feet away. This combination of talent had secured several wickets when Saunders, the skipper of the Vine, came in with wrath on his brow and winged words in his mouth. He vowed to Neville that if he once came within reach of his bat he'd smash his head in. We saw a grim smile appear on Point's face. Saunders took guard and Fred Norman proceeded to bowl a good length lob with a curl from leg. Saunders played back to

Sporting Recollections

it, and like lightning, like an arrow from a bow —for indeed in those days Neville was more active than any kangaroo—“Point” dashed in, and ere the ball touched ground was in his hand, and was neatly tossed up into the air, well out of reach of Saunders’s wrath, who, as he walked back to the tent, merely made the remark, “Well, I’m d——d!” I remember that Martin Norman was playing in that match. It was the last time I saw him, for he died quite young.

On that same Westerham ground, which was in those days on Farley Common, long before there was any thought of a ground in Squerryes Park, I was very much astonished at the end of some match or other, when I suppose I was about three- or four-and-twenty, by the well-known village grocer, one Sam Atkinson, coming up to me and saying: “I’ve backed you, Mr. Frank, for six bottles of champagne to throw farther than anybody else on the ground.”

“My good man, *I* can’t throw. *I* never threw a measured throw since *I* was born. *I* don’t believe *I* could chuck eighty yards to save my life.” And this *I* honestly thought was the truth. *I* knew *I* could generally reach home from long leg, and that was all.

“But you *will* throw for me, sir—won’t you?” said Sam.

Of an Old 'Un

"I'll do my level best with the greatest pleasure in life, Atkinson," I replied ; "but I tell you honestly, I don't think you've got a dog's chance, and that your six bottles of 'fizz' are as good as 'gone.' " To cut a long story short I won with a chuck of 103 yards, which of course is nothing like a really first-class throw, but it landed old Sam Atkinson his half-dozen of "fizz," which, thank God, I did not help to consume, for I imagine that even my cast-iron inside would have had something to say about the quality of Westerham champagne in those days.

I played a great deal of cricket in the 'sixties for the "Cricket Company" at Upton Park, Essex, only six miles east of the Royal Exchange. It was a lovely ground in the park of Ham House, at one time the home of old Samuel Gurney, the Quaker, and head of the firm of Overend & Gurney, which came to such terrible grief in 1866. Here is a true yarn about old Sam Gurney, who was my great-uncle, his sister, Elizabeth Fry, having been my grandmother. Uncle Gurney usually carried half a handful of sovereigns in his waistcoat pocket in case he chanced upon any of his innumerable nephews or nieces, for he was the most generous of men. I met him one afternoon in the grounds of Ham House when I was a small child, and after a little kindly talk—for the dear old man loved children

Sporting Recollections

—yes ! even me—he said, “ Well, good-bye, boy, and here’s a sovereign for thee.” To which I replied, “ But, Uncle Gurney, you gave me a sovereign when I met you this morning.” He looked me very straight in the face, and went on, “ Did I, boy—did I ? I don’t remember meeting thee at all this morning. Never mind, thee’s an honest boy ! Keep ‘em both, boy—keep ‘em both.” Here’s another yarn about him, for the truth of which I had my mother’s word. On leaving Lombard Street one afternoon to drive to Ham House, he found to his horror that his old and trusted coachman was inebriated. So he put the servant inside, mounted the box himself and drove east down Fenchurch Street, through the wilds of Whitechapel, Bow, and Stratford, and through his own lodge gates. There he pulled up, and having stirred up his old Jehu, who, no doubt, was much revived by an hour’s repose inside the vast barouche, and having given him a severe but not unkind reprimand, added : “ And now, friend, thee may get back on to thy box, for I’ll spare thee the disgrace of being driven into thine own stable-yard by thy master.”

The wickets provided by the kindly hosts of the “ Cricket Company ” were perfect, and any one who failed to get runs on that ground could get them nowhere. I also well remember those

Of an Old 'Un

enormous great brown china double-handled tankards that the solemn old butler from Ham House used to bring out and hand round to the thirsty players. Ah ! they were, indeed, cheery days, and never have I played more wholly delightful cricket than for the "Cricket Company," nor served under a more charming captain than old Ted Buxton. In those days we had two annual matches—Gentlemen of Norfolk *versus* those of Essex—at Ham House and East Dereham respectively. They were productive of good cricket and great fun ; and in looking through the past such old friends as these come back to me : Charlie Absolom, Jimmie Round, Tommie de Grey (for not yet was he Lord Walsingham), Ted and Gurney Buxton, Bob Gurdon, W. F. Maitland, Fellowes, Cotterill, "Cat" Davis, *cum multis aliis*. Where are they all now ? Ah ! One morning we were playing this match at Ham House, and one of the crowd was desirous of improving his knowledge of entomological history, and to what better authority could he possibly appeal than to Tommie de Grey ? We had been staying the previous night with Ted Buxton at Knighton. "Oh I say, Tommie," hallooed the voice of the inquirer after knowledge from the deep field, "my tub this morning was chock-full of a lot of tiny little wriggling devils of things about a

Sporting Recollections

quarter of an inch long ! What on earth could they have been ? ” “ In your tub, old man ? God only knows,” came the answer like a bullet across the ground.

I played a great deal at that time for the dear old “ Butterflies,” and most capital cricket it was under the leadership of that excellent and charming fellow, “ Puffin ” Guillemard. When I went away to Africa in 1875 I saw no more of old “ Puffin,” alas ! And shall not do so now until we meet in “ that bourne.” I wonder if they play cricket there, and whether we are allowed to take with us the cricket of our youth, or only that of our enfeebled, doddering old age. I wonder—— (Note by Publisher. Stop wondering ! At any rate on that subject. It will do you no good and you’ll get no forwarder.) Yet one more match did I play for the “ Butterflies ” somewhere about 1890, and, O Lord ! what a leather hunt we had at The Mote, near Maidstone. All the first day we were out in the field. Charlie Leslie was confiding enough to put me on to bowl. The very first ball was hit hard by Tommie Atkins, and caught at the wicket. Unfortunately the umpire was scratching his head, and his cap fell over his face, and he gave Mr. Atkins not out. After that Mr. Atkins, not unnaturally, after the manner of his kind, proceeded to get something over 250.

Of an Old 'Un

One doesn't soon forget a little mistake of that sort. The next morning there was a message from the umpire to say he couldn't come, that he was very ill, and had been obliged to take to his bed. I know there wasn't a "Butterfly" on the ground that wouldn't have been delighted to hear that, whether he dreaded the one as little as the other or not, he had taken to his grave. I also played a great deal for the "Incogniti," both under Gussy Hemming before he became such an ungodly swell as Governor of Jamaica, and other beautiful things, and under his brother before him. I can only, apart from the cricket, recollect one amusing little episode connected with the "Incogs." We were playing against the Gentlemen of Sussex at Brighton, and were all putting up at the "Old Ship." Rather late, after a very peaceful rubber—we played whist in those days—with poor Charlie Alcock, Gussy Hemming, and Thomas, I sought my couch. Now, it so happened that one of our team, who was young and inexperienced, nevertheless a good boy and a good cricketer, had taken his champagne at dinner, as Othello took other things, not wisely but too well. Imagine my dismay when I looked at my bed to see this child sound asleep in the middle of it. Wake him, and send him off to his own room, which, however, I did not know, seemed the right

Sporting Recollections

thing to do without a shadow of doubt. Yes ! but wake him ? I might as well have tried to wake the dead. Poor Kid, I hadn't the heart to put him on the floor or dispose of him by any other drastic method. So I just left him in peace and sallied forth with a candle in my hand, and a night-shirt over my arm, in the hope of discovering an unoccupied bed. I entered several rooms without adventure, and found them all occupied. At length, I very quietly opened the door of one, and my candle shed its light on the faces of a young man and a young woman. I have every reason to believe that their certificate of marriage was somewhere in the apartment ; anyhow, I most sincerely hope so, for the "Old Ship" was a most old-fashioned and law-abiding hostel. As I looked at the touching scene before me I am afraid I laughed. The man woke and sprang towards me, and in less than one-tenth of a second I had closed the door behind me, blown out my candle, and fled down the passage, and held myself flat in the doorway of a bedroom. In the semi-darkness I heard the man's steps and saw him go past, and then I, too, very quietly disappeared in the other direction and sought the smoking-room, where I very comfortably passed the remnant of the night, until it was time to go for a swim.

Of an Old 'Un

The "Incogs." used in those days to play a match every year at a well-known place in Hertfordshire called "The Node." There was an old fossil of an umpire who knew but little of cricket, but, because of his age and infirmities, was allowed great liberty by the skipper of "The Node" Club. Among other privileges, this old boy was allowed to smoke while standing umpire. This was, of course, quite wrong. On no other occasion in my life during a decent cricket match have I known an umpire permitted to smoke. Once, when I was bowling, the smoke from this old duffer's clay continually drifted across my face, and was very baulking. I asked the old cock very civilly to leave off. Not he ! He had always been allowed to smoke and was going on a-doing of it. I appealed to the skipper, and got the same reply with a little temper chucked in. So I asked old Gussy Hemming to put some one else on to bowl, and I never played at "The Node" again.

I played a few matches for the M.C.C., and have most vivid recollections of many cheery days (and nights) at Woolwich when playing against the Gunners. I think the first match I played against them for the M.C.C. was in the quite early 'sixties. I remember old Billy Nicholson was our skipper, and on the other side were many whose names in the realms of cricket

Sporting Recollections

were household words. Taswell, Inge, Milman, "Daddy" Newbolt, poor "Struther," *cum multis aliis*. I recollect old McCanlis was playing for the Gunners that match. A corporal he was in those days, and in these it always gives me infinite pleasure to meet him among his children of the "Nursery" at Tonbridge and talk of old days. I can recall yet another exceptionally cheery M.C.C. match, a few years later, against the Southern Division, when the ground was just inside the lines at Hilsea. Some of us were staying at an adjacent mansion, which, by the bye, has since been burnt to the ground. Our dear, good host was in the habit of conducting matutinal family prayers for—I presume—the sake of example to his establishment. I feel sure it was with no idea of edifying himself. One morning there was a scene so amusing that even now, some forty years afterwards, I laugh as I think of it. We, *i.e.* some of us, were assembled in the hall—and please don't forget that the night before we had been very late, with dancing, card-playing, billiards, and other innocent recreations. Our host was seated at a table with a very big Bible and other devotional works in front of him, and was turning the pages backwards and forwards with rather shaky fingers, when some twenty male and female servants sailed in and took their seats. The

Of an Old 'Un

pages of the good book still fluttered backwards and forwards and the fingers shook still more vigorously. At length the Bible was shut with a bang and the would-be reader exclaimed aloud: "No ! I'll be d——d if I can ! Go away, all of you, and lie down somewhere else."

With reference to the M.C.C. the well-known and oft-quoted words of our old friend Borbonius are for the thousandth or perhaps ten-thousandth time appropriate : "Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis."

How many years does it take now-a-days to get elected to the leading club ? Twenty ? Possibly five-and-twenty. I don't think my election in 1863 took a week, certainly not a month. Poor Tommy Hoblyn asked me one Sunday afternoon at his home at Rickling Green if I belonged to the M.C.C., and on my replying in the negative, suggested proposing me. I was more than willing, and very few days afterwards heard that I had been elected. Poor Tommy ! He was awfully delicate, and died very soon afterwards, when he was only thirty-one. I remember he was a great friend of poor Bob Fitzgerald's. I only played for him once at Ricking Green, and it was against the "Quidnuncs." We had a most frightful leather hunt, and as we were very short of bowling, I got what might somewhat coarsely be exceedingly correctly described

Sporting Recollections

as a most unconscionable bellyful. C. G. Lyttelton (the present Lord Cobham) and several giants of somewhat less pronounced cricketing stature were playing for the "Quids," and, odd as it may seem, through the intense good-nature of Tommy Hoblyn, one H. E. Bull, of Oxford Eleven and Harlequins and Gentlemen & Players renown, was allowed at the last moment to play for them, for they were a man short. It was a mistake! So indeed we of Rickling Green ascertained to our cost a little later, when both he and C. G. Lyttelton proceeded to make well over a century apiece.

I have played cricket in many very uncivilized places, and in many quarters of the globe—on the Pampas in South America, in the wilds of Kafirland, and in many and various places scattered all over South Africa. On the frontiers of Kafirland I licked an eleven of natives out of our police and militia into such decent shape that in matches got up with all the surrounding magistracies we never lost one. They were most excellent material to work upon, had eyes like hawks, and from their everlasting habit of throwing knobkerries, very soon became the most deadly shots with a cricket ball. Their use of English at cricket, for they knew not the meaning of a word, was at times most amusing. For instance, one Zenzili, whenever

Of an Old 'Un

he hit a very big smite, invariably called out "Hardt lines" as he legged it off to try and run six; and Daimani, when he was bowled, remarked "Good for you, damn!" as he retired to the shade of the adjacent mimosa. It was good fun and interesting withal. I fear that since my departure from those distant scenes in the Transkei, cricket, among the natives at any rate, must have passed into oblivion. I cannot in any way whatsoever picture to myself a half-bred Dutch missionary taking the trouble to instil into the minds and muscles of his Kafir brethren a love for the intricacies of the game of cricket. His only possible chance of profit would be by selling a bat for a cow, a ball for a sheep, and possibly a set of stumps for a nanny-goat and her two kids.

During the summers of '85, '86, '87, before I returned to South Africa again, I played cricket almost every day. I frequently met the Oxford "Authentics," and made friends with many of those dear and most charming boys. I can see them still, and still hear their voices ringing across the cricket field, the bar of the King's Arms at Westerham, the streets of the village, and even from the windows of the Town Hall, of which later. One "Spotty," who, in the regions of Fleet Street, at any rate, they now call "The Pieman," "Pebble" Stone, Britten

Sporting Recollections

Holmes, Guy Ewing, Acland Hood, I greet you all once more. I shake your hands and think of you as in those dear days, when you fairly took possession of a certain hostel, and won smiles from the fair Hebes who dwelt therein. Ah me! and now you are all potent, grave and reverend signiors, anyhow exceedingly grave; churchwardens, sitters on the bench and at county councils, with eyes severe and beards of formal cut, and, yea verily, I fear, of some of you at any rate, the "fair round belly" so rudely referred to by the bard may not prove inappropriately quoted. But a sigh escapes me as I think of that dear, bright, kind-hearted boy Harry "Tommer," gone from us years ago, but never forgotten. He was one of the very best and cheeriest souls I ever knew. I would he were here still. If he gets his deserts it is indeed a land of peace, of happiness, and beauty where he now dwells.

" May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more."

The rest of that poem is not applicable to poor dear Harry. The mighty Geoffrey Ware, too, who became a parson and went from us, not I suppose because he became a parson, but afterwards. You may not believe it, but I have had in my life a great many parsons for my

Of an Old 'Un

friends, and it has struck me somewhat forcibly that very often the best of them seem to be wanted, either for preaching or other purposes, at headquarters long before we have had enough of them in our mundane barracks. Poor old Geoffrey Ware! If in the realms to which he has gone his preaching is one quarter as terrifying to evildoers as his bowling was on a fiery wicket in *this* world to ordinary mortals, he must now be dwelling among the saintliest of the elect.

Although I was the skipper of the opposing side, the "Authentics" were so hospitable as to ask me to stay with them at the King's Arms at Westerham. Yes! thank you, we had quite a merry night, though I fancy, and I rather hope, that it is now forgotten. So does Guy Ewing, I expect, as he is a shining light in these latter days in the same neighbourhood—churchwarden, county councillor, potent, grave and reverend signior, and all the rest of it; and well, yes! hasn't altogether done himself badly in the way of that "fair round. . . ." Pass along, please, pass along! After dinner that night while we were looking about for something for our idle hands to do, as usual the devil—handy person under the circumstances—came along in the shape of a Punch-and-Judy show. The very clip! We very soon had the two proprietors

Sporting Recollections

inside the hotel and regaled them with beer, much beer, and anon left them smiling, happy and contented. We then proceeded to annex their show, drum, Pan-pipes, and all that was theirs. With this little lot with beat, much beat, of drum, and blowing, rather discordant if my memory serves me, of the Pan-pipes, we paraded the town. "Spotty" headed the procession with the big drum, and "Pebble" Stone tootled on the Pan-pipes, while to me was relegated the honour of shuffling along inside the Punch and Judy affair, and phew ! yes ! it *was* rather like that. Also I sweated some, for the thing was no light weight. The inhabitants seemed to like it and joined in the procession, and there was, I remember, a flag or two held aloft on sticks. Now Westerham was in those days a very quiet, inoffensive, and most wofully dull little dorp, and its inhabitants most exceptionally law-abiding citizens. My beloved 'earers, I tell you we stirred 'em up a bit that night. When we thought we had paraded the town sufficiently we somehow, *i.e.* a few of us, made our way up to the billiard-room in the Town Hall, and from that exalted position Guy Ewing addressed the crowd. Where were the police ? you ask. A silly question, if you'll pardon me. They were not present. But I am able to state that they were perfectly satisfied

Of an Old 'Un

with the existing situation. As far as I can remember Guy's speech ran somewhat on these lines, but I'm not very sure of the exact words : I know it savoured very strongly of Stratford-on-Avon—

“ Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears : Although, as far as I can judge at the present most interesting crisis in the affairs of men and of Westerham, your mouths would be of more use to you. Poor, poor dumb mouths ! Fill 'em ! fill 'em ! and afterwards perhaps they won't be so dumb. But put no enemy in your mouth, certainly not an adder, even though his painted skin may content your eye more than an eel, which is a slimy brute and steals away the brains, and has a very ancient and fish-like smell. I lie not, my friends, believe me ! I can indeed at my need tell a lie about anything. But I cannot lie in a cowslip's bell. But I can suck anywhere, suck any mortal thing that's good, but where the bee sucks there suck I not. My friends, I suppose you'll soon be going home. Don't do it ! You know what happens to home-keeping youth. What ? You don't know. O monstrous doleful thing ! Then, alas ! all the voyage of your life is bound in shallows and in miseries. But our time, O ye dwellers in this fair vale, runs short, the iron tongue of midnight

Sporting Recollections

hath told, the glow-worm shows the matin to be near, and I hear the lark, the herald of the morn, on the misty top of Toys Hill. Seek, then your homes, in maiden meditation, fancy free ; and when you get there I sincerely trust that you'll find the prop that doth sustain your house intact. Good-night ! our revels now are ended, and we purpose melting not into thin air as you might think, but into the Arms of the King, up the street, where falls not hail or rain or any snow, but on occasions a little beer, which goes far to heal us of our grievous wounds, and where after life's fitful fever we hope to sleep pretty well, thank you. Farewell ! and if we do meet again—why, we shall smile. Rather ! ”

In those days we had some cricket in West Kent which went by the name of the “Old 'un's Week,” and O Lord ! what fun it all was. I called unto me my relations and friends, saying unto them : “ Rejoice with me, for my week is at hand. We will make merry and be glad, and go forth into the wild places of Kent, even with bat and ball, and a pot of paint that is red, and disport ourselves with the natives of those regions, who shall rejoice greatly.” Forthwith there came to me nephews and sons, and great friends without number, and there was assembled

Of an Old 'Un

a goodly number of most excellent cricketers, who made the members of some West Kent cricket clubs sick nigh unto death in the hunting of the leather. Of my own family we were usually seven. But I don't think Wordsworth's description of his seven could in any way have applied to us. However lightly we may have drawn our breath, I am convinced that the expression "a simple child" could in no earthly manner have been correctly applied to any one of us. A few of my nearest and dearest pals, including one Arthur Cornwallis, Hughie Spottiswoode, a handful of Leveson-Gowers, a Merchant or two, or perchance one Billy Rashleigh, and a certain "Bishop" Kemp or Jack le Fleming, made up the team. Anyhow it was hot enough. We played Westerham, Squerryes Park, Brasted Park, Wildernesse and Sevenoaks Vine, Squerryes being a two-day fixture. Jollier cricket I never played, and very good withal. A. M. and E. C. Streatfeild, Hugh "Spotty," Jack le Fleming, "Billy," and Arthur "Corny" at their best, were not a bad start in any team. An old Kent "pro," one William Draper, amused me when we were playing against the Vine, by telling me before play commenced that he had a ball up his sleeve that would beat Mr. Edward (E. C. Streatfeild). He said nothing further to me about that ball that

Sporting Recollections

was concealed in his sleeve. Ned's score that day was 128 not out, obtained in under an hour.

We all, as a rule, put up part of the time at the King's Arms, at Westerham, and the remainder at the Crown at Sevenoaks. A new landlord who knew not Joseph, or even his brethren, to say nothing of his cricket team, had come to Westerham and appeared to be very nervous. Arthur Cornwallis frightened him horribly, I remember. I fancy that landlord viewed our departure with great thankfulness. At the Crown at Sevenoaks, on the other hand, they truly loved us, and nothing could exceed the kindness with which they treated us. When we came away the manageress assured us that we had made no noise whatever, and that she wished we were going to stay six months. I heard, by the bye, afterwards, that there had been a poor little parson next the room where slept (?) Arthur Corny and one "Whack," otherwise Cyril Streatfeild. That poor little parson's views on the subject of noise were wholly different from those of the beaming lady in the bar parlour.

Much about the same time I had the great honour of leading ten of my family to victory on the cricket field. We were by no means a bad team. We played against Colonel Warde's Eleven at Squerryes, and afterwards sat down to

ELEVEN STREETFIELDS L. SQUERRIES, 1886



Of an Old 'Un

dinner at my old home, Chart's Edge, a party of seventeen, all Streatfeilds. It was verily a most joyful gathering of our clan. I gravely fear it would puzzle me now-a-days to get up an eleven of my family that could escape the most ignominious defeat from a fifth-class dame's school. My own generation is dead. If it isn't, it ought to be for any use it is where eye, hand and foot should work together for good. Then the next generation is occupied, the best of them with inspection of schools, and helping in the leading of British youth into the paths of industry, to play in all things with a straight bat, and never to throw a half-volley to the wicket-keeper. Others could, I honestly believe, play as well as ever. But they won't, and talk rot about old age, rheumatism, and other increasing infirmities. And the young men and schoolboys don't seem to me to care a bit about cricket, and I never see our name in print in any matches or hear of them in any school or college eleven.

In the north-west corner of Berkshire stands a charming country home, where in one cricket season I think I bore my part in five cricket weeks. One of my sons, at the conclusion of the last, tendered his thanks to the Giver of all good things, for he affirmed that had there been one more my constitution must inevitably have

Sporting Recollections

broken down, and he would be left a lone and sorrowing orphan. Dear delightful Pusey ! Can I ever forget those cheery days and most blissful and alluring nights ? Surely the fun, the charm and the chaff were unending. Dear lovely châtelaine of those enchanting halls, let me once more kiss your hand, and tender you my warmest thanks for all those bewitching hours passed beneath your sweet kindly roof-tree. In imagination I can still hear your thrilling voice that came so softly to us in the hush that followed, perchance a dance to the strains of the Blue Danube, or even a game of blind-man's buff—

“Lady, let me believe I love you purely
As the saints love on high ;
Let me believe in this one love so surely
That it can never die.
Oh, let me lay aside my sins and weeping,
My manhood’s doubt and pain ;
And on thy shoulder let me fall a-sleeping
And never wake again.”

Yes ! It was soothing indeed, and I was never tired of listening to the entralling echoes that you were always so charmingly ready to waken for me. Yes ! indeed, dear Pusey was a place to be remembered. Never shall I look upon its like again. From roof to cellar always filled with the most perfectly charming young people, and the only time that was not alive with pleasure was when we had perforce to go

Of an Old 'Un

to bed for just a short time before the encroaching brooms of Abigail and her satellites. Among the *young* people I do not, of course, include myself. I was indeed the one and only Methuselah of the party, and they most sweetly and kindly put up with me. Ah me! what a note of sadness rings through the melody as these memories of the past come back to me, and tears, idle tears, come welling up unbidden to the eyes in thinking of the days that are no more.

I never played any first-class cricket, for the most obvious of all reasons. I don't fancy it would have appealed to me. I played several times for the Gentlemen of Kent, and it struck me as a solemn business, and not at all according to my ideas of cheerful cricket. I was once playing for the Gentlemen of Kent against the Gentlemen of Sussex at Brighton. It was during the same week that during the Kent and Sussex match, 1865 or '6, I should think, some scoundrel, who I suppose had a little bet on hand, got at the wicket with a hammer. The wicket was, however, changed, and the nefarious machinations of the evil-doer rendered abortive. After dinner on the first day of our match, when the clock approached eleven or thereabouts, our skipper suggested bed. It was no uncertain suggestion either. Bed at eleven did not in those days appeal to me, and when I stated that on

Sporting Recollections

the contrary I was going out with a little pot of red paint in my hand to see the town of Brighton, and should be back to breakfast, or at any rate in time to play next day, the looks that greeted me were anything but alluring.

I have known most intimately hundreds of first-class cricketers, and I am perfectly certain that they do not derive anything like the pleasure from their cricket that we poor duffers do from ours. Besides all this, in looking around me in the past I have noticed that some of the finest players in England have given up playing in first-class cricket, and have yet continued to play other cricket three or four, or even six days a week. I wonder how many times my own nephew, E. C. Streatfeild, played for Surrey, in which county he was most unhappily and mistakenly born, poor boy ! Not very many, I trow ; though of this fact I am certain, that had he been eligible to play for his own county, Kent, *and in the consulship of Lord Harris*, he would have done it whenever he could. So would I most gladly if I had been young enough and good enough. But that again is another story.

F. H. Norman in seven years, '58-'64, only played for the county ten times, and he was one of the best cricketers in England. Alfred Lubbock, another magnificent player, only ap-

Of an Old 'Un

peared for Kent on four occasions. Edgar, his brother, only once, and that was against M.C.C. Now why was this? I know well! At one time I am perfectly certain there were eleven amateurs in the county of Kent who very seldom played for the county at all, who could simply have knocked the existing eleven into a cocked hat. In due course came along Lord Harris, and all went well, and following him other brave and influential knights of the willow, who have made Kent cricket a very different affair from what it used to be when I first knew it.

A somewhat peculiar thing happened one day on Southborough Common in 1866. I was playing for Gentlemen of Kent against (I think) an eleven of Tunbridge Wells and district. Harry Fryer was umpire, and my mate at the other end sent me back, and I was—as I thought—run out by two or three yards, and went away without asking. When I got near the tent, G. M. Kelson ran out and met me, and said, “Cut away back and get in your ground, he knocked the bails off before he got the ball.” I went back and stood in my ground, and on being asked what I’d come back for, replied that I had not been given out. Fryer was appealed to and said that I had not been *run out*, but that I was out now for leaving my ground. This decision, in solemn conclave afterwards, was held to be

Sporting Recollections

rotten. We were all staying at an hotel in the Pantiles. I think it was called the Sussex County Hotel. G. M. Kelson, Edward Hardinge and I had a rubber of whist with a dummy after dinner, and I remember I never had such a run of good cards in my life, and that I scooped up many shekels. My opponents tried to get some of them back over billiards after breakfast in the morning, but that only made matters worse—for them. Then I got hold of a newspaper, and the first thing that caught my eye in enormous letters was “Failure of Overend & Gurney.” Now it happened that two years before, when I had married and settled down—yes ! I said “settled down”—my cousin Sam Gurney, son of the old Quaker, had let me have at an exceedingly moderate rent a very pretty little furnished house on the banks of the river Wandle, with about a mile of fishing, and a very nice little shoot. “Twixt thee and me,” he said, “is no need of any lease or agreement.” Now I was done, done brown. For in due course all the Gurney property was sold, and we had to turn out and seek other quarters. It was indeed a sell. That was our first turn-out from home. My good Lord ! but we have had a good many and very varied ones in many outlandish places of the earth since those days.

CHAPTER VII

Back to South Africa again—Bechuanaland—Evil times, and no residence of any sort—Cornwallis Harris's picture of the high-road to Kuruman—Red tape, plenty of it—A medical examination, and an old fossil says I am not sound. Lor! —A little game of golf—A candid opinion of a good many Government officials whose only occupation at that time consisted in licking the boots of that great and good man, Cecil Rhodes—A description of a frontier officer as he should *not* be—Keeping up the dignity of Government out of the taxpayers' pocket—Government servants in Downing Street and abroad!—Methods of justice and decency in Bechuanaland—A murder case of a very brutal description, murderer let off by the all-pervading red tape—Bechuanaland Border Police a disgrace to civilization, officers worse than the troopers—Injustice to good men in the past, Byng, Bartle Frere, Chinese Gordon, Butler, Archer Shee, James Outram, Hammersley and dozens of others—A little geology to finish up with—The Kuruman caves—A terrified land surveyor—The story of the puff-adder, by the kind permission of Mr. Theodore A. Cook, the editor of *The Field*.

TOWARDS the end of the summer of the Jubilee year, a summer assuredly to be marked by all loyal, true-hearted Englishmen in red letters, I took my departure again to South Africa. I had been appointed by the Colonial Office as Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate of an ungodly hole in the wilds of Bechuanaland called Kuruman. I was well aware that this appointment meant complete exile—exile from

Sporting Recollections

home, from friends, from all the decencies of life and from all congenial companionship. But I fondly imagined that as I was about to serve the Imperial Government I should assuredly be treated with some sort of consideration, and that at any rate some slight degree of thought might possibly be bestowed towards rendering the lot of the wretched expatriated official as little unendurable as, under the circumstances, was possible. I was indeed bitterly, hopelessly wrong. I was chucked down into this God-forsaken, and at the same time missionary-ridden (the terms are by no means incongruous) hole of a place like a sea-damaged bale of goods, and there left to rot ; to live or die, to be well or ill, to smile or weep as the gods might decree, and, as I could most plainly observe, there was not a single official in the country, or any other for that matter, who cared one solitary iota about the matter. But, as I think I have said before, I agree to the uttermost with the words on the old sundial, " Horas non numero nisi serenas." I will therefore, as far as possible, try to thrust on one side records of the deep and dirty waters through which I had to struggle during my sojourn in Bechuanaland, and only put before my readers matters which may perchance interest, and here and there I hope may possibly amuse them.

I have recorded elsewhere how, about ten
164

Of an Old 'Un

years before the time of which I am now writing, I was sent as a pioneer Resident Magistrate to the wilds of Kafirland to take up my abode, together with my wife and a son, at a place on the hillside where there was no dwelling of any sort—no ! not so much as one stone upon another. Now once more I was dispatched into the wilderness, the *avant courrier* of official civilization, the first Government officer to take up his abode in the midst of the various tribes that inhabited the desert country around Kuruman. True ! there were indeed at the place when I got there several most excellent stone buildings, erected at very great expense by the headquarters of the particular missionary society that held sway at Kuruman. These most capital habitations, the home of the two dissenting parsons that were so comfortably housed therein, left nothing to be desired, except, perhaps, from other folk's point of view, a change of inmate. Many and many a time have I cast a longing eye towards those comfortable homes when I possessed not even a room in which to lay my head, and had only a tumble-down, leaking, flea-infested old shed for my daily—and still worse, nightly—abode. The missionaries indeed, when I arrived at my destination, were so fortunate as to possess yet another comfortable home that was empty and uninhabited. It was suggested that

Sporting Recollections

this house should be let, for a consideration, to be left to their clerical wishes, to the homeless Civil Commissioner. Not one bit of it ! They would not hear of it for a moment ! Nice, kind, obliging, cup-of-cold-water-in-the-name-of-their-Master-giving people. That house remained empty and unused during the whole of the time that I dwelt at Kuruman. I heard afterwards that it was at once let to my successor by the missionaries on his arrival. He, however, was a Dutchman and a dissenter. I know of a motto carved in the stonework over a certain window, which runs, “*Majores vestros et posteros cogitate.*” Were I the architect to put the finishing touches to a building destined in the future to be the abode of one or more ordinary missionaries, such as, with few exceptions, indeed, I have found them, deeply, indelibly engraved above the doorway should appear two very well-known lines. The first should read, “All hope abandon, ye who enter here” ; the second, a little shorter but much to the point, “Nothing for nothing, and damned little for sixpence.”

Among the numerous Kafir tribes that I have sojourned with, I have been favoured with many and varied nicknames. One of these was “Vulin-dhlela,” which means “Clear the road.” I had been at Kuruman but a very short time indeed when I thought that nickname most appropriate.

Of an Old 'Un

In Cornwallis Harris' excellent book, *The Wild Sports of Southern Africa*, one finds opposite page 32 a picture entitled "The High-road to Kuruman." This picture is accuracy itself. The high-road consists of just the wheel-marks of an ox-wagon which has passed, and which one can still see dimly in the distance. Following the wagon up is a man in the foreground, red nightcap on head, pipe in mouth, kettle in hand, to secure from which its remnant dregs of coffee he has no doubt remained behind his comrades. Not far in front of him lies a sick ox left to die, and very soon to be surrounded by a ravening mob of vultures waiting for the end, or, to be quite true to nature, until the end is very near. All around, as far as the eye can see, is desert, only desert, with just a stunted bush here and there and an ant-heap to complete the dreary spectacle. It is desert indeed. And into such surroundings as these was my lot cast for the time being. When I had existed at Kuruman about a year I was one morning interrogated by a horrible little man from the mission station wearing a dirty white tie and a collar that had apparently never visited a *blanchisseuse*, and who spoke with an accent that savoured strongly of the Glasgow railway goods yard, as to when Mistress (*sic*) Streatfeild would be coming out to join me. My answer was abrupt and to the point: "To this beastly

Sporting Recollections

hole? I would sooner see Mistress Streatfeild (as you see fit to call her) in hell than in Kuruman. Hell *may* possibly be bearable. I am perfectly certain that Kuruman isn't."

O Lord! how I hate red tape. It has interfered with my enjoyment in life times without end. Then I am only too well aware of unnumbered old fogies who sucked in that bugbear, Government office routine, with their mother's milk, whose tiny limbs had been bound round and round with coils of red tape, and whose minds had been everlastinglly enmeshed with that "monster custom that all sense doth eat." I thank my God that I am not, and never have been, one of these most offensive persons. In the ordinary offices of bankers, merchants, brokers, printers, publishers and so forth, where the object is to *make* money and not to *waste it*, red tape is scarcely known and common sense takes its place.

Before I started on my way to Bechuanaland a skein of the horrible material enmeshed me. In the meantime I should greatly like to know the value of the stationery alone that is unfairly and downrightly *wasted* in Government offices, year after year, without the slightest check being placed on such a nefarious process. I was solemnly informed in most official language, on a most unnecessarily large surface of official

Of an Old 'Un

letter-paper, with the insignia of the Colonial Office emblazoned upon it, that before proceeding to South Africa to assume my duties it would be necessary for me to present myself to some old fossil of a doctor chosen by them and get a certificate that I was sound wind and limb and fit for service at the Cape of Good Hope. Good God ! And only two years before I had returned from the said Cape of Good Hope after ten years' service there, during which I had seen my way through three Kafir wars and had endured endless hardships of no ordinary kind by flood and field, and had never once been on the sick list or left a day's work unattended to. Does not that strike you as a somewhat tasty morsel of red tape ? Isn't there an old proverb lying about somewhere that tells us that the man who pays the piper should be the one to call the tune. In my case it was the red tape of the Colonial Office that called the tune, but nevertheless the two guineas that went into old Paracelsus' clutches came out of *my* waistcoat pocket. Anon, the old dear proceeded to examine me. He puffed and fussed and grunted, he punched me about and sounded me all over my body. It certainly didn't hurt me and I only hope it amused him. Then there ensued the following conversation with old Æsculapius, who had assumed an air of very great importance—

Sporting Recollections

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Streatfeild, I don't think I am justified in passing you."

"Why not?" I asked, for I flattered myself I was just about as fit and strong as any mortal of my age could possibly be.

"I regret that I find your heart very seriously affected," was the old cock's reply. At this I laughed. Yes! Laughed a good deal. Possibly I was very ignorant, but I felt certain such a thing was utterly out of the question.

"You are pleased to be amused, sir," went on the old dear. "May I venture to ask why?"

"For this reason, sir," I replied. "I shot almost every day through last shooting season, walked to and from the various rendezvous, distances of not unfrequently twenty miles, on almost every occasion. I have played a cricket match very nearly every day through this summer. I can eat a hearty breakfast, drink a quart of stout and then walk off twenty miles as hard as I can lick any morning you like and never turn a hair. That is why I laugh, and I think I am justified."

The doctor snuffled and fussed a bit, and I dare say thought I was an advanced liar. But he gave me my pass all right, and if he is still on this side the river perhaps he will be glad to hear that to-day, twenty-five years after he said my heart was not trustworthy, it is still going

Of an Old 'Un

strong, and that I am looking forward to testing it to the utmost during the shooting season that is just started. I have taken the trouble to look up in one of the back numbers of *The Field* an account of something I did eight years after this worthy doctor's examination, which I think goes far to prove that medical science, especially as represented in the British Civil Service, is not altogether infallible, and possibly not unbound by the horrible entangling meshes of the aforesaid red tape. Yes! there was a little bet or two about it.

"It may interest your readers to have some account of a *tour de force* accomplished by Mr. Frank N. Streatfeild, a member of the Limpsfield Chart Golf Club over the club links on June 28th. This gentleman undertook to play sixteen nine-hole rounds (144 holes) in one day, playing each hole out, and in addition to walk to and from the links, a distance of four miles each way. Mr. Streatfeild, moreover, set himself the task of doing the 144 holes in 720 strokes (an average of five a hole), and, as will be seen from the subjoined return, he very nearly accomplished the feat. Indeed had it not been for the rough and fiery state of the greens consequent on the long drought, and the abnormally bad lies that his ball only too often found on the course, the specified number of strokes would have been

Sporting Recollections

more than amply sufficient. Three balls lost (a loss of six strokes) and some eight or nine lifts out of unplayable places added very materially to the score. Starting from home at 2.30 a.m., Mr. Streatfeild began to play about 3.30. The actual time occupied in play was fourteen and a half hours, and the player was at home again soon after nine o'clock p.m. It should be remembered that Mr. Streatfeild, whose name has long been known amongst the big game in South Africa, on English cricket-fields, and on other fields where the driven partridge skims all too confidently over the fence, has only quite lately taken to golf, and has already seen more than half a century of vigorous life. Such is the *perennis majorum virtus*. Mr. Streatfeild was accompanied throughout by his son, Mr. Cyril Streatfeild. The rounds were as follows: 50, 45, 42, 44, 44, 42, 52, 42, 44, 47, 47, 47, 46, 48, 42, 43—725.

(Signed) "F. W. PARSONS,
"Hon. Sec. Limpstield Chart Golf Club."

I may add that I was not the least tired, and ate an unlimited supply of cold roast beef, and drank a bottle of champagne for supper, and was off again early next morning and played a cricket match at Chislehurst, Sevenoaks Vine against West Kent. So much for the poor
172

Of an Old 'Un

heart that was reported not good enough for service at the Cape. And Brutus is an honourable man—I mean the doctor.

Now those august authorities of the Colonial Office and elsewhere in Government departments, held in bondage by the encircling trammels of the aforesaid red tape, are not in the smallest degree inclined to hurry themselves over any of their ponderous machinations. We all know this to our cost, and also that any business establishment conducted on the lines of any Government office would promptly rush straight to ruin. It therefore did not at all astonish me, as soon as ever I had accepted the appointment of Civil Commissioner at Kuruman, for I too have dwelt in Arcadia, to ascertain that there was a most tremendous hurry for me to take my departure, although it had taken months for the Solomons to find out that such an appointment was desirable, and that I must be prepared to go out by the next mail. Oh yes ! I knew the beggars pretty well, and during the exceedingly brief interviews, brief as I could make them, that I had to undergo with one or two of the Colonial Office clerks, I was astounded—yes ! even I who knew the animal—was astounded at the supreme ignorance displayed as to the affairs of South Africa. Those among us who have read the Life of General Butler have learnt a good deal more

Sporting Recollections

about the wilful, wicked ignorance displayed in Government offices since the days of which I write.

So by the next mail I hied me away. On my arrival at Cape Town, before proceeding north I had an interview with the Governor's representative, and much good that did me. It was the same man who later on, together with that great and good and straight (Oh, very !) history maker, Cecil Rhodes, helped to engineer the Jameson Raid behind the Governor's back. Dear me ! how I did hate that man. He had the face of a rattlesnake, but no rattle in his tail.

There being a great hurry for me to take up my residence at Kuruman, as I was informed by the Colonial Office authorities in London, at Cape Town I was ordered to go some hundred miles or more out of my way to a place called Vryburg, to report myself to the Administrator of the whole of Bechuanaland. I got as far as Kimberley by train, a weary journey, and from there to Vryburg, a very much wearier one, by mail cart. During the whole of that desolate solitary drive there was only one incident that brought a smile to my face. The mail cart arrived about six o'clock one morning at a place called Taungs, where resided a future brother magistrate of mine. He came out and greeted

Of an Old 'Un

me kindly, took me into his house and offered me refreshment. Now what do you think that hospitable soul suggested my drinking at six a.m. after a very long and dusty desert drive? Gin and bitters! Now I have drunk Caña cocktails with Gauchos in Argentine pulperias, I have absorbed a very small quantity of Cape smoke in wayside hostels, and have sampled "corpse-revivers" in a Bowery sparring crib, to say nothing of inferior and sweet champagne in some improper places in New York, so I feel sure that I may be considered very catholic in my tastes. But gin and bitters, utterly filthy at any time, at six o'clock in the morning, would surely to any God-fearing traveller be wholly impossible.

On arrival at Vryburg I tried to report myself to my chief at about noon, and ascertained that he was still in bed though not ill. That made me open my eyes. I was later in the day asked to dinner, and went. I then was informed that there was no hurry in the world for me to take up my appointment at Kuruman, quite the contrary. I fancy his Honour the Administrator was really rather puzzled to know what to do with me. However, he decreed in his great mind that he and his two secretaries required a little relaxation, and so they would in about a week come to Kuruman with me, introduce me

Sporting Recollections

to the missionaries and the surrounding desert, and there leave me to my fate.

I had a very miserable week at Vryburg, with nothing to do and very little to read. I made the acquaintance of my Chief, and came to the conclusion that never in my life before had I seen such a glaring instance of a round (very round indeed) peg in a square hole. Now my idea of what a frontier head official ought to be is represented by such men as John Nicholson, Hodson of Hodson's Horse, Redvers Buller *ætat.* 45, Evelyn Wood at the same time, and scores of others that I have known and read of ; strong both mentally and physically, upright, honourable men, who for no earthly consideration would touch pitch, not even for the wealth of Kimberley and Johannesburg rolled together ; hard as nails and ready at a moment's notice to nip on a horse and ride off sixty or even eighty miles to suppress a native rising or smother a frontier foray in its birth. Those are the sort of men that I delight to honour and to serve faithfully and to the best of my ability.

Now let me put my new master, the Administrator of Bechuanaland—a country larger than the United Kingdom—before you. He was no doubt a very able lawyer and had done excellent work as a judge in Cape Colony. A worse training for a frontier Administrator, where

Of an Old 'Un

common sense, accurate observation, and a very acute knowledge of human nature are of infinitely greater importance than a knowledge of law, I cannot conceive. The *suaviter in modo* was his, but the *fortiter in re* was most lamentably lacking. He never mounted a horse. Simply he could not. He was very short, enormously fat, and carried on his fat face long brown whiskers. They used to be called Piccadilly weepers. Had he ever got outside a gee (I cannot imagine such a thing possible), and happened to fall off, he would inevitably have emulated the final catastrophe of one J. Iscariot.

I once did know of such a horrible ending to a man's life. I had often seen him. His name was Kotze, and he was stupendously obese. One night when travelling in a mail cart through the Long Kloof north of the Outeniqua Mountains he fell out. I don't quite see how to write it gracefully, but, not to put too fine a point on it, he burst, and died very few hours later. My good Administrator, had he ever dared to get on a horse and taken a toss, would most assuredly have done the same. As a matter of fact, however, I believe he died in the odour of sanctity in his own bed. As he spent about eighteen hours out of every twenty-four in that same, according to my arithmetic and very meagre knowledge of betting affairs, the market

Sporting Recollections

odds that he would do so are three to one. He was by far the laziest Government official I ever came across in all my wanderings. Indeed he was the only really indolent officer I ever knew.

Frontier officials, be their faults what they may, are not often lazy. I have no remembrance, with that one most alarming exception, of ever having any *really* great difficulty in getting a man started. Had the authorities seen fit to let me find my own way from Vryburg to Kuruman, after the Administrator had seen, or thought he had seen, what manner of man I was, it would have cost the Government, at the outside, a couple of sovereigns for the hiring of a horse to carry me the two days' easy ride. The little holiday (it was nothing else, for not one of us did a stitch of work the whole time) of the Chief and his staff cost fully £400.

About noon one day, for we couldn't ever get the old buster ready for a start before that hour, we got under weigh ; the Chief and I in the most luxurious Cape cart I ever sat in, behind four very good horses. Our impedimenta, consisting of a big mess marquee, about a dozen ordinary bell-tents and cooking paraphernalia, was conveyed in bullock carts. I can tell you when the Administrator travelled there wasn't going to be the slightest discomfort or lack of any description in the commissariat department

Of an Old 'Un

—not one bit of it ! He was a greedy old pig, and gave a great deal of consideration to the manner in which he filled his most capacious tummy. The two secretaries rode after us, and, moreover, we were accompanied by a detachment and captain of the Bechuanaland Border Police. It was, indeed, a show. I must confess I didn't understand it at all, and thought it all absolute rot and utter waste of the inoffensive taxpayers' money. If the Chief imagined it would in any way impress *me*, he was indeed a long way from the truth. Perchance he thought he was keeping up the dignity of the Government. I hate such infernal nonsense ! If a Government thinks it advisable to waste several hundred pounds in order to induct a fresh twopenny-halfpenny official into his distant dog-hole of a place, in my opinion that Government is in sore need of advice as to the spending of the said hundreds, in putting some sort of a roof over the poor twopenny-halfpenny official's head, and in ensuring the poor beast some very slight degree of comfort, and, at any rate, some meagre shelter from the storm rather than in wasting them over some paltry and unneeded display.

On our arrival at Kuruman the Administrator and his attendant satellites, including myself and my new clerk, lately trooper in the B.B.P.,

Sporting Recollections

a nice blue-eyed boy of two- or three-and-twenty, whose father I had known as representing the Colonial Commissariat Department in the Gcaleka-Gaika war of 1877-8, made our camp in a somewhat sheltered valley a mile or more away from the mission station. The Administrator was fox enough for that. There we spent a few days doing—well, precisely nothing ; there was nothing to do. Yes ! we did have a meeting at the mission station and made a few speeches, all of which, including my own, were composed of most unadulterated rot. I was introduced to a few traders and missionaries, and during the meal that was most hospitably provided for us by—I believe—the London Missionary Society, also to some teetotal beverage that was called “Kuruman Wine.” My Lord ! I once in the heat of the moment, years before, drank some stuff called “Zoedone.” Luckily it was out of doors and far away from civilization. It made me most abominably sick. Why not ? This “Kuruman Wine” stuff would have killed me stone dead at a mile. I took but one tiny sip. It was enough ! What on earth the muck was made of, God alone knows. It tasted like corked raspberry vinegar bottled off into an old boot. Thank you !

When we were still in our camp I had occasion to interview my Chief one morning, and

Of an Old 'Un

sought him in his tent. He had a bed on a real iron bedstead, and the bed had *sheets* on it. No ! I am not lying ! Honest Injun ! Honour bright ! Now, I have roughed it from Dan even to Beersheba under every imaginable circumstance, and have lain on the lap of Mother Earth in all companies, from general officers with much open pastry on their bosoms to dead niggers with nothing but the skin God gave them, but never, in the whole course of my life, either before or since, have I seen sheets to sleep in when camping out on the veldt.

The only permanent quarters at Kuruman that could be found for my poor clerk and myself were as paying guests with a broken-down, bankrupt trader who had married a servant from some mission station. They had a child about four years old. The woman was everlastingly pouring into my ears the fact that she was a lady. I was glad she told me ; I might otherwise have missed it. Our meals were truly awful. Not only were they almost uneatable and absolutely beastly, but still worse, the table-cloth and crockery were never clean. To put the finishing touches on to the entertainment, the poor little child, for whom I was truly sorry—although I not infrequently wished it was dead—used to sit with us at table, and its ill-clad, awful mother systematically gave it bones to suck as

Sporting Recollections

a solace for its tears, for the poor little beast was always crying. These tear-bedewed bony remnants were shed about the table during the meal, and didn't in any degree serve to stimulate our anything but fierce appetites. Although we were always more than half starved, we could scarcely touch our food amid such beastly and disgusting surroundings. I complained to the master of the establishment, and put the case before him. He wrung his hands, and even went so far as to shed a tear or two. He was indeed a weak vessel. He pleaded guilty to every indictment ; said he was truly sorry, acknowledged he was starved himself, but could do nothing—literally he dared not. So, of course, I could only laugh, pat him on the back and tell him to cheer up. Poor beggar ! I was indeed honestly sorry for him. With that awful woman he hadn't the very ghost of a chance ; she could have licked a dozen of him.

One morning the poor man departed in somebody's bullock wagon for a few days. When I went to bed that night I thought my couch felt uncommonly bony. On closer inspection I ascertained that between me and the steel slats was just one blanket, and that the mattress had been abstracted. It would have served that woman of wrath right had I gone straight at her and pulled her out of bed by the hind leg

Of an Old 'Un

with an ox-reim and abstracted her mattress. As it was, I only laughed at the consummate impudence of the woman, and possessed my soul in patience until the morning. She had, as I thought, taken the thing to make a bed for her wretched husband in his wagon. For once that awful virago of a creature got a bit of her own back. I owed her a good deal, in many ways, and I rather fancy I paid in full. Then I wrote her a cheque for our keep up to date—and it must not be forgotten that we were paying for our bed and board considerably more than ten times their value—shook the dust from our feet and departed.

Not far away was an unused ruined shed on the mission-station land, doorless and windowless, that had been a storehouse in the past, and, permission obtained, into this shanty we put our kits and took up our quarters. It was by no means water-tight, but the roof at one end kept out rain. The floor was composed of dust inches deep. Now this description of our new home doesn't sound tempting. I tell you we were more delighted to get into it, and away from the voice of that awful she-cat, the filth and squalor of her beastly home and her dirty bone-sucking baby, than I have any words to describe. Anyhow we were not starved, and a feeling of cleanliness returned to us, for we both

Sporting Recollections

knew well how to rough it with decency ; and honestly in that poor, leaky, tumble-down old shanty we were for a season far from unhappy.

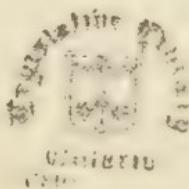
Office I had none—not a vestige of one. Nevertheless, without appliances of any sort, what little work there was to be done was expected by the authorities to be accomplished with regularity and elegance, as though I had all the staff, stationery, cocked hats, brass buttons and other impedimenta of Downing Street lying under my nose.

During my official career at the Cape of Good Hope, it has on more than one occasion been hinted to me by fussy and unwashed Africander magnates that my methods of sustaining the dignity of the Government left a good deal to be desired. For instance, if I wished to interview a headman at a distance I should usually chuck a gun over my shoulder, and, with a haversack containing a little food, walk off and do my work. Whereas my brother official would make an imposing advance with many orderlies and other pretentious paraphernalia around him. If he was an ordinarily constructed mortal he would go on horseback, but if he happened to be a very fat and unwieldy person he would travel in a Cape cart or other conveyance. I was literally the only South African official that I ever heard of who was in the habit of accom-

Of an Old 'Un

plishing this distant work on foot. No Africander ever walks a yard if he can by any possibility avoid it. This process of going about one's duties *magnâ comitante catervâ* is considered to be a support of the dignity of the Government. As far as the natives themselves are concerned this is a perfectly fallacious idea. We who know the wily Kafir intimately are well acquainted with the fact, and, moreover, however great a man the Kafir might be, even to the chief of a tribe, he would be infinitely more impressed by the dignity of the Government if, in the name of the said Government, you presented him with a ticky (threepenny-bit) or a tot of Cape smoke than he would be by a tail of orderlies a mile long following at one's heels.

Of course any fool with half an eye could grasp the fact that in my entry into Kuruman and my taking up my abode there as Civil Commissioner with all these tents, equipages, secretaries, orderlies, and the detachment of the B.B. Police, it was the comfort and the dignity of the fat little Adminstrator that was desired rather than the dignity of the Government. If this latter had really and truly been the case, would it not, after the departure of the Adminstrator and all his accompanying glories, would it not as the weeks passed by, have been more



Sporting Recollections

likely to have made an impression on the native mind of the glory and magnificence of that distant land that the Great White Queen was ruling over so splendidly, if, when they came to pay their tribute to him, or to lay their cases for his jurisdiction before him, they had found that great Queen's representative housed in a building somewhat better than a dog-kennel, while he administered justice in a hovel that a cave-dwelling baboon would have looked upon with scorn? "Them is my sentiments," as the child remarked to his Maker, when he was by way of saying his little prayers, and pointed to the paper pinned at the foot of his crib on which he scribbled his poor little childish desires.

I not infrequently in those days pondered on the most luxurious apartments wherein sat at ease the lordly officials at Downing Street. Have not even my own feet, when by the Grace of God I have been allowed to interview these mighty potentates in their palaces, sunk down into their deep-piled carpets. Have I not looked almost with awe on the resplendent appurtenances that surrounded them? Have I grudged them their luxuries and all their costly magnificence? Not a bit of it! But while sitting alone, an exile in my mud hovel, I have thought it might possibly be well if those in

Of an Old 'Un

authority at home could occasionally bring themselves to give a thought to their servants who are working for their King and country far away. Perchance their service may be quite as faithful and unselfish at £500 per annum as is that of the more fortunate ones who draw £5000. Moreover, it gives pause for thought to those who serve in distant lands when they receive reprimands from the exalted ones because, forsooth, they have honestly ventured to incur an expenditure of three or four sovereigns for the good of their country, when they are well aware that thousands are forthcoming from the secret service chest to cover over the delinquencies of those who sit in high places and pose before the public as philanthropists and saints.

After I had been at Kuruman some time a court house and prison were erected, but no residence of any sort for the Civil Commissioner. The building was a disgraceful affair, *i.e.* as a building erected by and belonging to the State for the use of officials, and as a dwelling for the white-skinned constables. The floors were unboarded and consisted of just hardened mud. Ceilings there were none. Having nowhere else to go I lived entirely in my office, and slept in an adjoining chamber where reposited my bed, a chair, a tub and the office safe. Sometimes this

Sporting Recollections

contained a good deal of money. I thought that possibly some ill-advised persons might see fit to have a game of romps with that safe one night, and if so I thought I'd like to take a hand in that game. As may easily be imagined, the summer heat in that sub-tropical climate in a building with a corrugated iron roof was stupendous.

So frightfully hot was it one day that a prisoner, a black man too, died of heat apoplexy. He died in a large cell in which the prisoners were sometimes locked up in the day-time. There he succumbed and was found dead by the gaoler. There was no ventilation of any sort in that room. Please remember I had nothing whatever to do with the erection of that rotten building ; and had I ever made any suggestion, should have got my knuckles well rapped. I therefore at once had a proper ventilator put in on my own responsibility. It was about time, wasn't it ? For daring to incur this enormous expenditure, which was about three pounds, I received a somewhat severe reprimand. I have had a good many in my time. Have you ever heard of a duck's back in connection with water ?

Now had I done what was desired, that wretched dead prisoner would have been thrust underground without any further ado, without an inquest, without any inquiry whatever. No, thank you, not if I knew it ! I insisted on a

Of an Old 'Un

medical examination by a qualified doctor, and wrote the authorities that I would not have the poor devil's body buried until such examination had taken place and a proper certificate of death handed to me. I got my way. A doctor was sent, and a certificate that death was the result of heat in that accursed prison, a very black-hole of Calcutta, given to me. I was sorry for the medico, whom I knew well, and a very good fellow he was. The post-mortem examination, in which I took my part, was no child's play, for the man had been dead fully three weeks. But enough !

My work on the bench at Kuruman was usually of the dullest and most uninteresting description. It consisted chiefly of settling paltry disputes between natives and storekeepers under the heading "finance," both sides being more than willing to perjure themselves freely for the sake of a penny. I had a few differences of opinion to adjust among the natives, always in connection with *meum* and *tuum*, and usually originating in the fracture of the seventh commandment. In this matter I have found the wily Kafir differing in but a very small degree from his equally elastic white brother, from a moral standpoint. I have lived and administered justice among the Amaxosa tribes for many years. I have had thousands of them under me in

Sporting Recollections

war-time, and also have fought against them, and have studied the animal very deeply indeed, and am very fairly well acquainted with his manners and customs, which leave a great deal to be desired, and of Kafir law as administered by Kafir chiefs from time immemorial. It is, indeed, fearfully and wonderfully made, and more especially in connection with that same seventh commandment.

Now my fat Administrator, to whom all my sentences were sent for confirmation or otherwise, and by whom all appeals were reviewed, knew more about ordinary law with his little finger-nail than did I with my whole body. But about the natives and their little ways he appeared to me to know next to nothing. How should he? He couldn't ride; he couldn't walk; he wasn't a *man* at all from the Kafir's point of view. To win a Kafir's heart, and, so to speak, to get on the inside track, a white man must be able to ride or walk alongside of him all day long, to look after his own horse, to procure and cook his own food, and sleep on the ground in the open alongside their camp fire in peace and comfort. Now our Administrator, so far from being able to do any of these, could do none of them. If left alone on the veldt for a week he would assuredly have died of starvation. A more unlikely man to win a Kafir's heart or to be admitted to his confidence I never

Of an Old 'Un

encountered. To him, then, were submitted my decisions as to native differences of opinion. Not much wonder is it that they were usually reversed.

I will give an instance of a case in connection with Kafir marriage, and what it frequently leads to. I have had scores of such cases before me, chiefly when I was Magistrate over the Gcalekas. These cases I settled according to no law whatever with which I am acquainted. My decisions having been reviewed by the light of common sense, and not by law, were never reversed, and in due course these nefarious cases ceased to be brought into court.

Most people in these enlightened days know that when a Kafir wishes to take unto him a certain woman to wife he approaches her guardian, and they, after an infinite amount of chaffering, settle on the number of cattle that shall be paid for her. The cattle are handed over, the woman goes to her new kraal, and there is the end of the matter. The woman is, let us say, a very desirable lady. Very well set up, ninety-nine out of a hundred are that, and very pretty, but that from any white man's point of view is the thing which is not. Then as time goes on along comes King David, in the guise of a stalwart Gcaleka, and casts longing eyes on Bathsheba. Luckily in this case there is no

Sporting Recollections

Uriah the Hittite to be shoved into the forefront of the battle, or the Magistrate would take exceedingly good care that instead of the easy sentence meted out to him in history, and being eventually comforted in the fascinating Bathsheba's arms, Master David should most assuredly have felt either the encircling noose of the hangman's rope round his neck or the shock of half a dozen bullets in his cowardly bosom. In our case it was quite otherwise, although quite common until I got my magisterial clutches on to the malodorous machinations of the wily nigger.

The sheep's eyes of King David and the witching glances of Bathsheba had not gone unnoticed by that lady's lord and master. Seated in front of her hut one evening, Mr. and Mrs. Bathsheba made a little plan. The next scene was before *me* in the court. Mr. Bathsheba brought a case against King David for the recovery of four or five head of cattle, in that the monarch had broken the seventh commandment with Bathsheba, and had, in the words of the Bible, been taken by the woman's husband in the very act. It was an exceedingly clear case of adultery, *i.e.* according to Kafir law. Also, after a little cross-examination of Bathsheba and her husband separately, it was equally clear that it was all "a put-up job," and that

Of an Old 'Un

poor King David had been "had" stock, lock and barrel. I gave my decision that Bathsheba was an unblushing harlot ; that her husband was a dirty, disgraceful, self-constructed cuckold ; and I finished up by ordering him to hand over to King David the same number of cattle that he had claimed from the king. It will readily be believed that in that country at any rate I very soon put an end to immoral married people setting traps of such an unblushing and degraded nature in the hope of knocking unearned damages out of enterprising and unsuspecting young sportsmen. My Chief of those days was only too delighted to help me in trying to dis-establish such disgusting and dissolute customs, although without any doubt my decisions were contrary to any law. At the same time they were not nearly so drastic as are some of the punishments under somewhat parallel circumstances that I have read of in Leviticus.

The only case of importance and of real interest that came before me at Kuruman was one of murder. It was a most cruel and brutal case, and ended in a manner that to me at any rate was eminently unsatisfactory. It was brought to my notice that some years before a young Bushman of about fifteen had been murdered by another man, a Mochuana in the foothills of the Longberg Mountains, about a

Sporting Recollections

hundred miles away from Kuruman. I ascertained that there had been a witness to the murder. My object was to get hold of that witness and persuade him to tell me all about it. This was not so easy as it seems, for it is exceedingly difficult to get men of the same tribe to give evidence against each other. However, at length the man was persuaded, and, on my giving him a definite promise of immunity from all harm whatever that might ensue to him, told me the whole story, which was as follows.

He was asleep on the veldt among some mimosas, and not far away was the Bushman boy herding his flocks. He was awakened by a scream, and on looking round saw a man, whom he knew and named, beating the little Bushman on the back with a heavy knobkerrie, beating him apparently to death. At any rate the little Bushman was killed. The murderer then carried the body away a short distance and stuffed it down an ant-bear hole, that most common receptacle in Kafirland for bodies that have come to an illicit death, piled some sand on the top and went back to where he had killed the boy. I asked my narrator why he had not interfered. "I was afraid," was the reply. I well believe it. He went on with his story. Then the man picked up the dead body of a goat that he had killed from the ground, and went away with it, and

Of an Old 'Un

that was all he knew. I asked if he could take me to the ant-bear hole into which the body had been thrust. Indeed he could, quite easily, but he added that we should now find nothing but bones. I made arrangements for the future with my man and let him depart.

In due course I found myself, after a long and weary desert ride of nearly a hundred miles, at a police camp under the dark Longberg Mountains a few miles away. Next morning—it was Sunday, I remember—I went away quietly on foot with my guide, who had come by appointment to meet me. I carried a spade and a sack. After a few miles' walk my man stopped, pointed to where at his feet was a deserted ant-bear hole, and then went and sat in the shade of a mimosa a few yards away. Then I set to work with my spade, and in due course had excavated a grave indeed, in the sand. It was by no means the first time that I had with my own hands retrieved a body in a more or less advanced stage of decomposition from the ground, but only just simple, clean, inoffensive bones never before. I came upon a skull first. It was not fractured, bearing out what my informant had told me as to the manner of the murder. By the time I had finished I had the skeleton very nearly complete. Then for my ride home again.

After infinite trouble, and getting a great deal

Sporting Recollections

of false information, I ascertained for certain that the murderer had left the Longberg district some time before, and was at present working on the Orange River, some 250 miles away. I called unto me Trooper Lockie of the B.B.P., the only trustworthy and loyal member of that most dissolute corps that I ever had under me, explained matters to him, gave him a warrant for the apprehension of our man, plenty of money, and my blessing, and with these he departed.

About three weeks afterwards along came Lockie riding up to the court house with his prisoner on foot, handcuffed at the other end of a reim. He had done very well in finding him at first—no easy matter in that country—then in apprehending him, and at last in bringing him all that distance, single-handed, without giving him a chance of escape. The man made a full confession of his crime to me. He had killed the little Bushman because the boy had seen him steal and kill a goat from among the herd in his charge, and he was afraid of his evidence. He acknowledged that he had killed him by repeated blows of a knobkerrie on the back, for, in case the body should be found, he did not wish that there should be any external signs of his deed. He was perfectly callous about the matter, and appeared to think that

Of an Old 'Un

the murder of the boy was exactly on a par with the killing of the goat. I forwarded all the papers in due course to headquarters. Not unnaturally I fully expected and hoped that the sentence of death would receive the sanction of the Governor, and that the brute's execution would follow. Not at all! The papers were returned to me, and I was informed that as far as could be made out the murder had been committed before Bechuanaland had legally become British territory, and that as a matter of fact I was *ultra vires* in even having had the cowardly, dastardly ruffian apprehended. I was therefore to release him forthwith. I did so, and as he disappeared across the veldt I thought a great deal.

I had no wish to be hung myself, and I was well aware that to see that event take place there were many dirty little swine in Bechuana-land would have rejoiced greatly. Therefore I left undone what I should greatly like to have accomplished when I watched that brutal murderer walking away a free man. Had I dared I would have seen to it that although his hanging could not be managed, he should not have got many miles away from Kuruman before he had found a bullet whizzing through his head. The legal luminary at Cape Town, who had reviewed the papers that had come

Sporting Recollections

before him in the case, was so good as to add to his remarks that he thought it a great pity that so much trouble had been taken, and such useless energy thrown away over such an abortive case. *I* merely deemed it an infinite pity that such rotten red tape should set loose upon the face of the earth a proven criminal, the confessed and brutal murderer of an innocent child, for whom hanging would have been a lenient sentence.

Long before this, before even the foundations of the very far from imposing edifice, the court house and prison, had been laid, my poor young clerk had gone down with fever and had departed on sick leave. He never came back. He was never replaced during my sojourn at Kuruman ; so I was left alone to do the work of the entire establishment. When I took my departure the authorities paid me the left-handed compliment of sending three men to continue the work that I had accomplished single-handed.

There existed among my almost endless duties of account keeping, that of postmaster. Every postage stamp that was sold, every under stamped and unredeemed letter had to go through my books ; while the monthly accounts of the establishment so confused, so intricate and unnecessarily complicated were they, that Machiavelli himself would have shuddered at them.

Of an Old 'Un

The account keeping of ordinary folk, merchants, bankers and others, has always appeared to me to be rendered as simple as possible. Government accounts, in distant lands at any rate, seem to be run on lines that make the work of stupendous bulk, of most unnecessary confusion, and to an enormous extent to resemble the peace of God which passes all understanding. For more than a year when I left Kuruman I had been absolutely alone. Except for the very occasional visit on business of a missionary or a trader, or a chance official word or two with my chief constable or head gaoler—both good fellows in their way but utterly impossible as companions—I never looked on a white face.

One morning a most respectable-looking farmer came into my office and made application for a certain farm in the district that had been advertised for sale, and stated that he was most anxious that I should do my best with the authorities to obtain it for him. We had a long talk, and I treated him very affably, for I knew he bore a good character, and that he was a very fairly honest man. When he was taking his departure he dived his hand into a small bag he carried, and fishing out a roll of bank-notes, as I could plainly see, tried to thrust them upon me. Of course I drew back, and with a smile told him that we didn't accept bribes in my

Sporting Recollections

country. My poor farmer's face fell at the rebuff, and as he replaced his notes he remarked, "Well, then all I can tell you, sir, is that you are the only magistrate in *this* country who doesn't." I believed him to the uttermost.

There was a law at that time in Bechuanaland that any one discovering gold or precious stones on his land should, under dire pains and penalties, report such discovery at once to the nearest Civil Commissioner. It happened to come to my knowledge that a certain man had "salted" his farm with gold dust, and, moreover, that on the strength of the finding of gold on his land he was trying to sell the same for much. Good! First and foremost I ran him in for finding gold on his farm and not reporting it. He couldn't get away from that, and for that offence I gave him "what for." Then in due course I ran him in again for trying to obtain money under false pretences, and gave him "what for" again.

A most frightful handicap that I had to contend against in my work was the arrangement made for police duty. Of course all over the civilized world a Resident Magistrate has police under him who have to give his orders implicit obedience, or take the consequences. At Kuruman it was not so, nothing like it! The police arrangements were most horribly cumbersome and ineffective. I had for my use a detachment

Of an Old 'Un

of the Bechuanaland Border Police, sometimes in charge of a lieutenant and sometimes of a sergeant or corporal. Had this detachment been under the Resident Magistrate's immediate command, and moreover, had he possessed the power of punishment for offences committed in his own hands, all might have been well. But he had no such power at all, no power of punishment whatever. Such a system is rotten to the core. If the man who is empowered to give orders to subordinates is deprived of authority to punish for offences, as surely as the sun is in the sky the machinery will creak and groan and eventually crash. If my orders were disobeyed, as was occasionally the case; if there was slackness in the carrying out of such orders, as was quite usual; if there was drunkenness and debauchery in the police camp, as was invariably the case, all I could do was to report the matter to headquarters, and wait many weeks for a reply. I too have had the honour of commanding colonial swashbucklers, and most excellent fighting men a great many of them have proved. But to command men such as are usually found in a frontier corps of irregulars without the power of *instant* punishment is rather like storming a fort with guns loaded with thistledown. I reported the most disgraceful behaviour of the detachment at Kuruman, both officers and

Sporting Recollections

troopers, over and over again, and the only reply I elicited, as far as I can remember, was that my description of the police camp as a "drunken brothel" was exceeding the limits of expression that ought to be made use of in an official communication.

My readers will possibly think I am exaggerating. Oh no ! I am not. In proof thereof I will give a few trifling episodes in the career of a lieutenant of the Bechuanaland Border Police who was for a time in charge of the detachment at Kuruman. I had some of the details from Major Goold-Adams (now Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams, G.C.M.G., etc., etc.) and Major-General Sir F. Carrington, K.C.B., etc. etc. They are, I am glad to say, both still with us, and can stand forth and contradict me if I state what is not a fact. While this officer in question was at Kuruman he proceeded in the most dastardly fashion to go out of his way to seduce a trader's daughter. The ensuing consequences very nearly caused the poor girl's death. The medico-missionary who saved her, only just saved her, fancied I knew nothing about it. He was wrong !

On another occasion this officer and gentleman had a liaison with a trader's wife. That's all right ! I am no *arbiter elegantiarum* and I believe am no prude. Who am I to trouble my head about the contraband amours of any dissolute

Of an Old 'Un

and degraded frontier swashbuckler? But by and by our gallant Lothario, getting more than usually hard up, sought the deluded Aspasia and informed her that if she did not forthwith find him fifty pounds he would make a clean breast of the whole affair to her husband.

One more, a quite clean, decent and ladylike affair compared to the last. There was a temperance meeting at Vryburg one evening. To this meeting went our lieutenant, drunk and with a bottle of whisky in his pocket. He made a row, was turned out, and had a fight with the doorkeeper, who gave him a good licking. Now the Administrator was cognizant of this decent affair; Sir F. Carrington, who was in command of the B.B.P., but was away on leave, knew of it, and Major Goold-Adams knew of it. It was Goold-Adams who first told me about it. *Nothing was done*, and there was not even a reprimand. I have no comment to make.

With the exception of the first and second in command, and one other officer of the B.B.P., I never had the luck to meet one of them with whom I would have trusted a petticoat on a stick, or a half-crown on the table. The one exception was a dear good old thing who never tried to borrow money, never drank too much, hadn't an *h* in his composition, never washed,

Sporting Recollections

and was as honest as daylight. Naturally they gave him the sack. In that corps truth and honesty stood no chance.

In writing to a man with whom I happened to be acquainted I mentioned the blackguard of a lieutenant referred to before. I wrote that without a shadow of doubt he was the most unmitigated scoundrel I had ever met in South Africa. As I thought would probably be the case, this letter was shown to the lieutenant. By and by I received a letter from a dirty little skunk of a blackmailing attorney in one of the frontier towns, with whose most unclean reputation I was well acquainted, informing me that he had seen the letter in which I had called the lieutenant the most unmitigated scoundrel in South Africa ; that unless I at once inserted an apology in the leading Cape papers and paid over to him the sum of £500, I should at once be proceeded against for criminal libel. O Lord ! These two beauties must indeed have thought I was a mug. I took up my pen, sat down quickly and wrote that I had the honour to acknowledge the receipt of the attorney's letter, that it was quite correct that I had written that I considered the lieutenant the most unmitigated scoundrel in South Africa. Then I added, "I have, however, since writing those words, had occasion to change my opinion. I now believe I know one

Of an Old 'Un

other scoundrel quite as unmitigated as the lieutenant, and if you lay hold of your best Sunday looking-glass and take a squint into it you will see his face in front of you." I never heard another word about the matter. Even if the rogues could have raked together or stolen money enough to start the stone rolling, I knew well enough that neither of them dared face the evidence I could have given in the witness-box as to their characters.

But I think that is about enough of Kuruman and its affairs. I am sure that it is more than enough about the people with whom I was connected while I was wearing out my life in that dreary and ungodly hole. I hope my readers will believe, and I venture to think that my legions of kind friends will know, that when the affairs of this life go awry, when the clouds are very heavy and without a sign of any silver lining, I am not one to lie down in the ash-bin and howl. Nevertheless Kuruman very nearly beat me. I am inclined to think *now* that when I quitted its arid regions I was not very far from a mental breakdown. I don't wonder. I had been alone day and night for more than a year, and except for on occasional official word or two with gaoler and constable, never had communication with any white people at all. The hand of almost every official in the country was against

Sporting Recollections

me—luckily for me it was only on paper—and they were all, so to speak, thirsting for my blood. Every single one of the heads of the various departments was away on leave, sick or otherwise, some of these departments were represented by dirty little time-serving colonial cads, and one or two by young fellows from Government House, pitchforked upstairs to do Rhodes' dirty work and help to lay the foundation stones of some of his dastardly schemes. Verily I say unto you, they have reaped their reward. I am, as I sit in my humble abode with empty pockets, but I hope at the same time with clean hands, thankful that I was hated, and that I never for one instant thought of taking part with that band of lick-spittles who lay grovelling on the carpet around the rich man's table, waiting with greedy eyes and open mouths for the crumbs that should fall from it. I thank God that when day after day I chuck my gun over my shoulder and wander away to the covert-side, I am met with kindly smiles on all sides and a hearty welcome in endless country homes. I would not change these things for all the gold in Rhodesia, nor even to be made one of the noble band of Knights Bachelors, although the good Queen Bess did affirm that she had no greater honour to bestow. I rather think, from what I see around me, that the meaning of the words honour

Of an Old 'Un

and knighthood must have suffered some very alarming change since the days when such men as Richard Grenville, Walter Raleigh, and Francis Drake were proud to bend to receive the accolade.

Just to show the indecency of the treatment meted out to me towards the close of my career at Kuruman, not to mention the word injustice, I may mention that my clerk's annual salary was £200. Having done his work for more than a year, I applied for remuneration out of such unapplied funds. Result, peremptory refusal. When at last I found my health failing I applied for sick leave on half pay. Refused ! Leave would only be granted without any pay at all. And this although I had not taken a day's leave of any sort since entering on my duties ; and also that at the very moment of my application at least three heads of departments were away on long ordinary leave *on full pay*. It is not always that the goose and the gander are on all fours. In due course I got my leave for a certain date, without any pay at all, and made my plans to return home forthwith. The day for my departure arrived. I was a free man on granted leave. Not a soul had been sent to take over my duties. Of course any fool could see that it was a "put-up-job," and I got to know afterwards who it was that played me that dirty, spiteful

Sporting Recollections

trick. Just the sort of thing he would do. He was one of Rhodes's creatures, and a paltry little cad at that. I didn't wait for my successor, of course. Why should I? My leave had been granted, and why should I wait on and on for a man who for all I knew or cared might be dead and down an ant-bear hole by the roadside. I called unto me an honest storekeeper from near by who very kindly went through my books and counted my cash and took it over. Then I took my departure for Kimberley and home.

Some time before leaving Kuruman I had appealed to the Secretary for the Colonies, Lord Knutsford, as to the treatment that had been meted out to me, for I well knew I might as well appeal to a dead oyster as to Sir Hercules Robinson, and much good it did me. I was never even allowed to see his lordship or to speak to him. His secretary and clerks took very good care of that. They foisted off excuse after excuse upon me, assured me that I could explain matters to them, which was (so *they* said) equivalent to an interview with his lordship. They talked a lot more rot which I didn't swallow, and so it all ended. I sent in my resignation, *by request*, receiving a gratuity as compensation, which made me smile. I was also fined a considerably less sum than the gratuity for having dared to quit Kuruman before my successor had seen fit

Of an Old 'Un

to turn up, although I had the Government's permission to go on leave the day I did so, on an official document as big as a barge, in my pocket.

But I am howling like a pig in a gate over paltry grievances. What were my grievances compared to endless others that come flooding across my memory in a moment? What about that splendid man General Butler, who was purposely hindered in his work on the Nile by the authorities at home, and thwarted at every turn in his untiring endeavours to get his relief expedition to Khartoum in time to save poor Gordon's life? What of poor broken-hearted Bartle Frere? I think the finest man I have ever served under. To come to present times, what of Edalji? What has been done to recompense that poor, abominably maltreated man for his oppression by Government? and what for his utterly undeserved imprisonment and ruined career? Nothing! What of Archer Shee? I am not sure that that poor boy's case was not the most disgraceful of all. How the Government strove tooth and nail to make out they were right, and that the most palpably innocent boy was guilty. Lucky indeed was it for him that he possessed powerful friends, influence and money, or his innocence would never have been made clear, or at any rate would never have been



Sporting Recollections

acknowledged by Government. One more case and I have done, although I can think of hundreds, every one of which goes far to make my blood boil. Any one who has studied history in the early 'fifties will be aware of what that magnificent man James Outram went through, what oppression and indignities he suffered at the hands of the Government. He was at that time Resident at Baroda.

The system of corruption and bribery called "Khatpat" was rife, was rampant on all sides. Outram tried to put it down. He strove most manfully to exterminate the system amidst almost overwhelming difficulties and opposition. Did the Government help him? Quite the contrary. They metaphorically hit him over the head with bludgeons and brickbats; they administered reprimand after reprimand; they accepted lying stories about him from dishonest natives, and eventually insisted on his resignation. He returned to England forthwith. But not long after, it having been ascertained in England with what energy, acumen and uprightness his work at Baroda had been accomplished, he was recalled to India and reinstated in the very position from which he had been dismissed. Years before this, in advocating the case of a Lieut. Hammersley who had been most shamefully and unjustly treated, and sus-

Of an Old 'Un

pended from duty, Outram had got himself into hot water with the powers that were. Nevertheless he was found to be right, and that Hammersley was innocent of what had been urged against him. This decision was a little late, for when it should have been communicated to the unfortunate fellow he had been dead three days. He died raving mad, babbling of the wicked injustice that had been meted out to him.

But once more it is enough ! As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be until the day of judgment. Indeed in the days that are now with us I can't say that I observe any sign of amelioration in the Government of Great Britain and Ireland, either in their love of truth, their sobriety, their morals, or anything that is theirs. I thank my God morning and night on my poor stiff old knees that I have not had, and I will take exceedingly good care that I never do have, anything to do with any one of them.

For the very last strokes of the shuttle at Kuruman let us for a page or two study geology. With that view I will lead you right away into the bowels of the earth, where it is clean and sweet, so that at any rate we may quit the fœtid moral atmosphere in which I had been dwelling so much too long, with the odour of dear, clean, lovely mother earth in our nostrils.

Sporting Recollections

In Bechuanaland, as marked in our atlases, are many rivers. The Kuruman river is one of them. These rivers, as far as my experience goes, have no abiding existence above ground and no continuous flow. Some of them appear, flow for a mile or two, and then apparently die away or come to the surface again a dozen miles or more further on in the form of small and possibly stagnant creeks. The Kuruman river was no exception to the rule ; but it had a continuous flow at Kuruman or Latakoo, to use its real Sechuana name, of some four miles, and at certain times more. When I first knew the place, about a couple of miles down from the mission station was a rush-encircled lake of about forty acres, the home of many duck and other water-fowl. Among them many rare ones, including Spoonbills, and once Avocets. Avocets in an oasis of that desert country, and about a thousand miles from the sea-coast, struck me as quite an ornithological freak. I was not mistaken, for I shot one and skinned it. This lake as time went on disappeared ; and when I came away its bed—it was nowhere more than five feet deep—was just as dry as the surrounding desert. The source of the Kuruman river, above ground at any rate, was not more than a quarter of a mile from the court-house, but where its real origin was in the depths of

Of an Old 'Un

the earth God alone knew. It first showed itself from under a great rock at the foot of a stony hillside, with an excellent flow of crystal clear water, of about the same size and strength as that of the Kentish Darent opposite the Lion at Farningham. From there it meandered away down the fertile valley, being led off into side streams and small channels in places without number to irrigate the gardens of the surrounding inhabitants, missionaries, a trader or two, and their black brethren without end.

We have all of us, in *King Solomon's Mines* and other works of the same author, read of most thrilling expeditions into the depths of the earth of an exceedingly weird nature. I fancy Sir Rider Haggard may possibly have derived his ideas from a most wonderful underground passage that existed, and no doubt still exists, near the source of the Kuruman river. I have been through that passage many times ; I have explored it most thoroughly. It was creepy work. I am by no means sure that in these present days the conditions of either my nerves or my waist would permit such explorations, for some of the passages are extremely low and narrow, which is bad for the waist ; also one may remember that a dislodged rock falling behind one would shut one off from the outer world in those dark caverns for ever, and

Sporting Recollections

that thought is trying to the nerves. Among the rocks on the hillside was a small opening through which one could insert oneself and enter a larger passage ; through this one could make one's way by wriggling, and here and there crawling, until one attained to a closet-like aperture. In this it was necessary to turn round, a very tight fit, and drop out over a rock on the other side feet first. Then one came to quite a good open passage for some considerable distance, along which one could walk upright and quite comfortably. But along this passage flowed the Kuruman river, in places above one's hips, so soon to quit for the first time the regions of darkness and emerge into the light of day and look upon the glorious South African sun.

After leaving that passage the most jumpy and weird part of the journey had to be encountered, for one had to go flat down on one's stomach and crawl some yards through an aperture along which no fat man—most assuredly not the fat Administrator of Bechuanaland—could possibly have forced his way. Also that passage always had two or three inches of water in it. The water of course mattered nothing, but its very presence gave one pause for thought, not unconnected with a possible and sudden rise of water while one was, serpent-like, worming one's way along that ungodly burrow. After that all was

Of an Old 'Un

easy going, and one at length found oneself in a large and lofty cavern sixty or seventy yards in circumference and more than twenty feet high. There was a beautiful clean, sandy floor, and in this cavern were many bats, but none of the great fruit-eating fellows that are not far short of two feet across their wings. This cavern was the end of the passage, for I searched diligently many times and could find no possible exit. The total length of this subterranean way was, I was told, a quarter of a mile. Had you asked me its length after my first expedition through it, I fancy I should have put it at many miles. But after frequent journeys along it to and fro, both with my trusty guide and later alone, familiarity convinced me that two hundred yards was the very outside length of the whole thing.

On one occasion in the water I saw a few fish. They were evidently of the species called "Barbers" in those regions. They appeared to be pure white, and in the light shed by our candles looked weird and ghost-like as they swam round our legs. With a view to closer inspection I afterwards carried a stick with three fish-hooks lapped on the end, a weapon I have on occasions found not ineffective in climes other than Bechuanaland; but I never saw those white "Barbers" again.

Sporting Recollections

The man who surveyed the site for the erection of the court house expressed himself as anxious to explore those caves. I must confess I looked on his nerves with suspicion, for I had once been in his company in a small affair of an upset out of a Cape cart. His behaviour on that particular occasion was without form and void. Events showed that my suspicions as to his nerves for subterranean explorations proved to be not unjustified. We managed our outward journey without mishap, although I had noticed that the poor surveyor was more than a little jumpy. But on the return, when he got into the little closet cavern where it was necessary to turn round, he got stuck in turning, or thought he had got stuck, and set to and screamed—yes, shrieked at the very top of his voice. I was close by and laid hold of his hand and pacified him a little, poor beggar, for he was fairly terrified—I suppose at his own imagination, for there was nothing else to disturb him. A pretty spectacle in an underground cave about four feet square and three high—the Civil Commissioner of Kuruman with a candle in one hand, and with the other grasping that of a terrified land surveyor, who was yelling meanwhile loud enough to make the roof of the cave fall down and obliterate the whole concern! I calmed him down at length and got him out

Of an Old 'Un

into the open, looking more like a moribund monkey than an animated morsel of humanity. I will candidly acknowledge all the same, though I laugh now, that the first time I emerged into the open air from those underground horrors I felt rather as I have done in days of yore when I have survived my first over in an important cricket match, when the bowling was very fast and the wicket not quite all that it should have been.

On my journey home there was only one incident of any importance, and that one only of any moment to the writer of these pages. During the voyage I was struck by a puff adder that was on its way to the Zoological Gardens. I am allowed by my friend Mr. Theodore Cook, the most courteous editor of *The Field*, to insert a verbatim account of that episode as published in his excellent periodical. It is as follows—

HOW I WAS BITTEN BY A PUFF ADDER

"The wound it seemed both sore and sad
To every Christian eye,
And while they swore the dog was mad,
They swore the man would die.
But soon a wonder came to light
That showed the rogues they lied,
The man recovered of the bite—
The dog it was that died."—GOLDSMITH.

Sporting Recollections

And although it is twenty-two years, almost to a day, since that venomous reptile (*Clotho arietans*) got one of his fangs well across my right forefinger—trigger finger, worse luck—I am still hale and hearty. If I cannot do a day's work, it is nothing at all to do with the poor puff adder, for whom I have always had a feeling of respect, but rather the result of the frequent and persistent calls of that exceedingly disagreeable and ill-clad old gentleman who wanders about the world with his scythe and hourglass reminding people that youth has passed away and that old age brings in its train stiffness of limbs, dimness of eyesight, and plenty of other abominations.

Lest my readers should think that this story is an imagination, or merely the child of an inventive brain, I may refer all who are interested in the question to a letter which appeared in the *British Medical Journal* of June 1, 1889 (without any authority from me, however), written by a doctor who, to a very small extent, attended me. This letter is incorrect in many details, but it is there in print “to witness if I lie.” I may preface my story, then, by saying that I suppose I am the only man living who has been bitten—“struck” is really the proper word, for poisonous snakes do not “bite”—by a puff adder. In South

Of an Old 'Un

Africa their stroke is looked upon as certain death in a very short time.

In the summer of 1887—Jubilee year of blessed memory—I was offered by the Imperial (not Cape) Government the appointment of Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate of Kuruman, in British Bechuanaland. And it was in that capacity that I was sitting one day in my office at Kuruman when there entered to me one of my trusty police who knew my ways, and that birds, beasts, snakes, butterflies, and all such “small deer” were a joy unto me. He told me that he had seen a very large puff adder about a mile away lying asleep on the sand among some bushes. Would I like to get it? He had left a mate to watch it. Yes, I thought I would like to get it, for I was returning to England—by the mercy of a benign Providence—in a day or two, and thought I would take it to my friend Tyrrell, who superintended all the reptiles at the Zoo. When we arrived at the place where it had been the watcher told us it had gone away, but that he had marked it into a small patch of veldt bushes close by. I soon saw it, and crawled in after it, and in a moment had it by the scruff of the neck, so to speak. To ordinary mortals the handling of snakes is an abomination. To begin with, they are afraid of them. In this I do not blame

Sporting Recollections

them, for to them all snakes are fearsome brutes, and also poisonous, whereas in reality only about one in twenty is so. For instance, has it not been impressed upon me from my very cradle by all the old wives, both male and female, here in my own country in West Kent, that the pretty little, fragile slow worm, than which a more absolutely inoffensive, gentle creature does not exist, and which by the same token is not a snake at all, is a very deadly reptile? Then, again, the casual observer thinks that all snakes are dirty, slimy brutes. They are no such thing. I grant our common British grass snake can stink more than a little, and him I do not like handling until he knows me and has made friends, when he will keep his odour to himself. I think a deadly hatred of all snakes is born in us; but I very soon overcame this feeling myself by at first handling dead snakes, and then living innocuous ones, and at last those that were poisonous. I would now just as soon handle a cobra as a dead stick; but then it must be remembered that I give him no earthly chance to get at me. Well, yes; I must grant I once made a mistake with a puff adder, but that was only a fluke, and not altogether my fault. No one ought to handle thanatophidians, or death snakes, until all feeling of repulsion, even when a snake has his coils round your arms, has

Of an Old 'Un

entirely vanished. If you have the slightest fear of any snake it is absolutely unsafe to handle one at all.

But to return to my own puff adder. I carried him back to my quarters. I ought, however, to say "her" instead of "him," for she was a lady, although she behaved while I was conveying her ladyship to her new home in a most unladylike and perfectly outrageous manner. Puff adders are the most apparently peaceful and lethargic of snakes, and as a rule they will not move until they are touched or trodden upon ; but when they are once really roused nothing can exceed their passion and the lightning-like rapidity of their movements. As an instance of this, I was once rowing down a river in South Africa, and saw a full-sized puff adder swimming along—for they are very fond of water—some twenty yards away. I took up my gun and shot at him, and while he was wriggling I sculled up and lifted him on the blade of the scull. As I watched I saw a sort of haze round the blade, and plainly heard his jaws snap, and there he was with a coil round the scull, and his jaws holding on to the edge of it like a bull-dog. After I had shaken him off into the bottom of the boat I found one of his fangs still sticking in the scull. As an instance of how lethargic a puff adder can be, I once was

Sporting Recollections

tying up the painter of the same boat on the bank of the same river. My wife, who was with me, was walking on across the sand. I happened to look round, and saw her in the very act and article of stepping over a full-sized puff adder that was lying on the hot sand. Her footprints, as I saw afterwards on the sand, were within very few inches of the brute. He had not moved, and did not until I hit him a pat with a piece of driftwood. It was a very close call, for stockings are no good against the three-quarter-inch fangs of a full-grown puff adder. Why do they do it? I mean why do ladies go about unprotected in a place like that, where snakes almost swarmed at times? I cannot tell you; but they do, and many men—mostly Englishmen—go everywhere in their usual knickerbockers. Personally, I seldom wore anything else. When one has resided for some time in a snaky country one wholly ignores the fact that snakes exist—one literally never gives them a thought.

There was not the smallest doubt that day at Kuruman about the lady I was carrying being in a most uncontrollable passion. She writhed her coils backwards and forwards round my arm; she snapped her jaws like castanets, the poison meanwhile dripping from her fangs. She was, indeed, just then a very lively person indeed, and

Of an Old 'Un

far removed from being in any way lethargic. In due course she was safely stowed away in an empty cartridge box, wrapped round with an old Eton Rambler blazer, which by the same token I never remembered to retrieve from the Zoo. Her ladyship was not so very big after all—only three feet four—but I must allow she made up for it in breadth, for she had a waist that no lady with the slightest respect for her personal appearance would have submitted to. I found her ladyship was a bit of a fidget, especially at night, for she used to glide round and round her prison without ceasing, making a peculiar, rather weird, but by no means unpleasant, rustling noise. We have all read of “the scream of a maddened beach dragged down by the waves,” but it was nothing like that, although it did exactly resemble the soothing swish, swish, swish made by the pebbles on the glittering beach as the gentle summer wavelets murmur to and fro in the tide.

A few days afterwards I was in Kimberley for a night on my way to Cape Town. I had an exceedingly circumscribed sleeping apartment, and, having removed the puff adder from my portmanteau and put her—inside her box by the way—on the table which was close to my bed, I could very distinctly hear the frou-frou of her scales as she glided round and round her box.

Sporting Recollections

It was an unaccustomed lullaby, but infinitely better than the serenade of the prowling and amatory tom-cat, to which suburban citizens are wont, with muttered curses, to listen aghast. I was getting drowsy when the hour of midnight was tolled from an adjacent church. As the last stroke died away there rose upon the air one of the sweetest strains to which it was ever my lot to listen. Four men's voices, exceptionally good and trained to perfection, were singing in the near distance the hymn "Peace, perfect peace," not so well known then as it has since become. I could hardly believe my ears, and sat up in bed to drink in "those witching strains." Meanwhile her ladyship from her box warned me with her "shsh, shsh, shsh," that the trail of the serpent was over it all. "Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away." "Shsh, shsh, shsh." How little I imagined as I listened to the hymn and thought of my own loved ones far away, towards whom I was voyaging, that my weird companion, which was making its presence known with such simple, innocent sounds, was to cast me ere I met those dear ones again into the very jaws of death. The lovely hymn died away, leaving an unfilled blank. I felt as though I ought almost to discern the disappearing wing of Israfil himself, so enchanting had been the sounds. I was never able to ascertain whence this all-too-short

Of an Old 'Un

melody had emanated, but I expect it came from part of the choir of a Roman Catholic chapel. It would have been no disgrace to that of the Vatican itself.

I went on to Cape Town by train, and on arriving sought the shipping office to take my passage. The vessel, the *Roslyn Castle*, was full—full and overflowing, and they assured me that neither love nor money could procure me a berth. Most fortunately I knew the skipper well, and he soon had matters arranged by giving me a sofa in the cabin of an old gentleman, who I must say behaved like an angel in most graciously putting up with my presence without a murmur, for I am quite certain that in his inmost feelings he must have deemed me, a perfect stranger, a most unmitigated nuisance. When towards the end of the voyage that dear, good man found out that over and above myself he had travelled all the way across the Atlantic with a puff adder in his cabin, the horror depicted on his countenance can probably be imagined more easily than described.

The evening that we sailed from Madeira we were after dinner a large and very cheery party in the smoking-room. Somehow or other it had become known to my fellow-passengers that I had a puff adder with me in my portmanteau. They begged to be allowed to see it, and

Sporting Recollections

implored me to go and get it. For a long time I refused ; but at last was over-persuaded and fetched her ladyship, and in doing this I proved myself once more to be a fool. I do not think any one should handle poisonous and angry snakes except when alone. There should be nothing to take away the attention from what one is doing, even for the fraction of a second. For, after all, handling an infuriated thanatophidian is rather like playing with death. I took her ladyship out of her box and held her close behind her head, while I explained to the audience and spectators the marvellous internal economy of the poison apparatus. I opened her mouth and displayed the fangs rising and falling, showed where the poison glands lay, and how the muscles which raised the fangs at the same time pressed on the glands and forced the poison through the tiny duct that ran down the fang and into any substance into which the fang had been pressed. I did not at all imagine that in about a couple of minutes the aforesaid substance was going to be my trigger finger, but so it was.

My lecture being concluded, I proceeded to put her ladyship back in her temporary home. It must not be forgotten that she had been somewhat shamefully treated. She had been held for several minutes by the neck with great

Of an Old 'Un

firmness, she had had her mouth held open against her will while its internal mechanism had been expatiated upon, and had, indeed, suffered such indignities at my hands that she was in a most towering passion, and raging to fix her fangs in some foe. When one is getting rid of a poisonous snake without wishing to hurt it one should, in the first instance, be sure that no coil is wound round an arm or elsewhere, and that its whole body is free. Then, when one lets go one's hold, one's hands should be instantly snatched away and out of reach in the very act of quitting one's hold. When I was in the very act of quitting my hold of her ladyship some one close by spoke to me, asking a question, and I have no doubt—for I cannot say I was aware of the fact—I left my hand within reach of her deadly fangs instead of snatching it out of her way. I must have turned away my head to the man who spoke to me, for I did not see her stroke. But as I quitted my hold of her, in that very instant, as it seemed to me, I felt as though a knife had been sharply drawn across my finger, and, looking down, I saw the blood flowing freely and her ladyship out of her box and on the table, across which she attempted to make her way. I caught her by the tail, snatched her back, and jammed my arm down firmly on

Sporting Recollections

her head, and soon had her by the neck again, and with some little trouble, and I must admit risk of another bite, got her safely into her box once more. I suppose that when I was struck there were about twenty men in the room ; twenty seconds afterwards there was not one. I never saw a room cleared of its contents in like time ; they simply tumbled over each other. I yelled with laughter—I could not help it, although I was in such parlous state myself. Then, the *causa teterrima belli* being safely disposed of, the company came slowly back again and the doctor appeared. Of course, I asked for ammonia. There was none on the ship. For a record lot of stale, old, worn-out drugs—or, indeed, lack of them—commend me to a ship's drug-store. Well, as there was no ammonia, I took a great deal of brandy. I lanced my finger myself right down to the bone, all along where the snake's fang had made a long wound, and, moreover, with my own knife. Then I sucked the wound very vigorously, and I remember well the doctor trying to make me expectorate on to the floor of the smoking-room, which I wholly declined to do. I did not see why, even if I had got a death-wound, I should not depart with a clean record, instead of that of a dirty pig. Also I knew well, which probably the doctor did not, that a small amount

Of an Old 'Un

of snake poison like that taken internally would not do me any more harm than a square gin cocktail, probably not so much. Then I gave my keys and home address, in case of accidents, to my good friend Walter Lockhart, who had promised to look after me and also to carry out my instructions to the letter while I remained insensible, and soon after that I became unconscious.

I told Lockhart that probably I should be reported dead, but that I should not be, and that if he could get even a few drops of brandy down my throat when my heart failed it would jog on again, and that by and by I should come to. It was not ten minutes from the time the snake struck me to the time when I lay down on the smoking-room sofa and became unconscious. That was about ten o'clock. When I came to again the East was just getting rosy with the morning sun. Now what took place during those nine hours I cannot state on oath, although I was present, but I believe every word of what was told me by Lockhart, who sat by me the whole night through and carried out my instructions to the letter. I have not the slightest doubt that had it not been for him I should have been sent, wrapped up in a wad of canvas, with a bag of old iron for a companion, to the bottom of the deep blue sea some 350 miles this

Sporting Recollections

side of Madeira. The doctor came and looked at me occasionally and said I was very bad. Well, Lockhart could have told him that. By and by towards morning he told Lockhart that I was dead and that he was only fooling about with a corpse, and added that he should send a quartermaster to sew me up in my canvas shroud. To this dear old Lockhart replied that he did not care a damn what the doctor said, and that he was going to do exactly as I had instructed him, and as to the quartermaster, if he came along and laid a finger on me he would be a very sick quartermaster indeed before he, Lockhart, had done with him. By and by I opened my eyes with understanding, and spoke to old Lockhart with some degree of sense. I do not think I ever saw a man look quite so pleased in my life. I have had a "head" or two in my time, and have been knocked about a bit, and have ached and been broken in almost every bone of my body, but I do not think I ever felt so ill or suffered such tortures of pain as I felt when I recovered consciousness that morning. I ached from the tip of my finger to my shoulder as though the bone were red-hot iron, and my arm looked like a hard pillow. They carried me to Lockhart's bunk, and there I lay for twenty-four hours. Then with the help of an arm I could crawl a few yards. By degrees

Of an Old 'Un

the pain grew less, and by the time I reached home I began to take a little interest in life ; but for months I had to be very gentle with myself, and even six months afterwards, when I began shooting, I had to be most careful. I have never since been so strong as I was before. and have come to know the meaning of the word "tired," which I was unacquainted with before her ladyship took hold of me.

I notice, among many other foolish additions which have been made to this story elsewhere, the statement that the puff adder died a week after biting me. Did it ? I can testify to the fact that after the University cricket match of that year, which came to its conclusion quite early in the day, about a dozen of us went to the Zoo and saw it alive. I must allow that her ladyship looked very far from well. Poor beast ! Who can wonder, for she had eaten nothing of any description, not even a mouse, since that evening on the *Roslyn Castle* when she tried to take a bite out of me. Now that was on April 25, and we all know when the 'Varsity match takes place. I happened to call at the Zoo the very day her ladyship passed away to her Valhalla, where I presume the climate would most excellently agree with her, and where, if stories of apples and temptations be true, she would not be the only snake in the menagerie.

Sporting Recollections

I took her emaciated form to Rowland Ward, who very cleverly restored her appearance, and renovated her lost contours, and at the same time made her look very fierce and aggressive, with head erect and fangs displayed. She adorns at the present moment the Natural History Museum of Tonbridge School, with a photograph of the man she so very unsuccessfully tried to exterminate alongside of her.

Immediately on the arrival of the *Roslyn Castle* in the London Docks, my fellow-voyager, Lord Claude Hamilton, most kindly and promptly went off to old Sir Joseph Fayrer, who was I suppose at the time the highest authority on thanatophidians and their poisons, and the results of absorbing the same, and told him of the case, and that he would shortly receive a visit from me. Soon afterwards I called at his house in Harley Street. He examined my finger, which was indeed a ghastly spectacle, and much too offensive-looking for description here. Suffice it to say that I thought it useless to try and save it, and had already implored our own doctor, Arthur Maude, of Westerham, Kent, who I am glad to say, is still with us, to cut it off and have done with it. This he refused to do, and with the utmost care and cleverness, added to a free use of lancet and neat carbolic, in little more than six months had

Of an Old 'Un

changed it from a useless and painful stick of putrefied flesh into a member that through the ensuing shooting season was able to pull a trigger not more ineffectively than usual, and the following cricket season to let byes behind the wicket and secure "ducks' eggs" in front of them, very much as usual.

Sir Joseph and I had a very long talk, and as to my own case, he said that except from blood-poisoning there was now no fear of any fatal consequences. He asked if he might send down the street for a doctor, a friend of his, who took great interest in snake lore. So he came along, and we had a great palaver, and talked "snake" right away from the fourteen feet *Ophiophagus elaps*, largest of poisonous snakes, down to the little rustling *Echis carinata*, that in spite of its small body carries poison in its glands almost as deadly as the worst of its ophidian relatives.

"And where at the present moment is this brute that struck you?" asked Sir Joseph.

"In a hansom standing at your door, *en route* for the Zoo, to which place I am now on my way," was my reply.

"The devil he is! Let's get him in here and have a look at him."

No sooner said than done. I fetched the box in, took off the covering, and raised the lid, and was instantly greeted with a very ominous and

Sporting Recollections

prolonged hiss. It must not be forgotten that I only had one hand to use, for the offending—or shall I say the offended—member was very well wrapped up and in a sling. Sir Joseph and his friend looked on, and the former remarked : “ Well, all I can say is, if you’ve been struck by that brute, you’ve no earthly right to be alive. I suppose you won’t handle any more snakes now ? ” I laughed, and in less time than it takes to tell it, had her ladyship pinned by the neck and out of her box and in my hand. I can tell you, though, she got no chance of getting in a second barrel that round. After some examination by the two experts I put her back safely, and we continued our journey, and she was in due course deposited in her nice, new, warm, glass-fronted house, in charge of my friend Tyrrell.

One more scene, and rather an amusing one, in connection with her ladyship, and I have done. I one day entered the reptile-house with a view to making inquiries after her health, and saw two or three dozen people collected in front of the puff adder inclosure, to whom Tyrrell was apparently delivering a lecture. Unobserved by him I drew near and listened. He was recounting to the surrounding populace, in connection with her ladyship, who was lying very peacefully in front of them, on the other side of the glass,

Of an Old 'Un

my truly hairbreadth escape from the imminent deadly serpent. They certainly were "devouring" Tyrrell's discourse. As he came to the end thereof he turned and saw me, and pointing at me added, as if it were the epilogue to his narrative, the words: "And there's the gentleman!"

CHAPTER VIII

Fishing, lots of it—My Welsh tutor, his headers which were not *headers*, quite the reverse!—The Darent—My first trout—The wrath of the Squire—Tarred roads and consequently dead trout—Squerryes—General Wolfe—Lulling-stone—Sunset in Glendarent—Schwalbach—The Neckar—A day and not a wedding-day at Gretna—Tickling trout—Snatching carp—Some other dastardly methods of catching fish—Gaffing General Sir Redvers Buller from the depths of the Shin—Hopes of finding a drowned home-ruler, but no luck—Poaching and yet more poaching.

FISHING ! The very thought of it makes one's pulses throb. From the day when I pulled my first little troutling out of the not too pellucid Darent, until another not so very long ago when I stood over a Norway salmon but little short of fifty pounds, that lay conquered on the bank at my feet, have I been quite mad (and I am not ashamed to write it) on the subject of angling for trout and salmon. I must confess that in fish other than these two I have never taken any really deep interest. I am quite prepared to admit that there are men, probably much better sportsmen than I am, who will sit up for hours making plans, who will haste to rise up early and so late take rest to compass the capture of an infernal great ugly brute of a carp that is no

Sporting Recollections

use to any one when he is caught either alive or dead, except to gather dust on to the top of his case in some fisherman's *sanctum sanctorum*. I never had a fish of any sort stuffed in my life. "Never caught a big one," says the "carping" critic. Well, for the present we'll let it go at that.

When I was little more than a child a benign providence decreed that my education should be taken in hand by a very long Welshman. He was remarkably long, and I remember at the same time remarkably holy. Neither of these things in any way whatever appealed to me. Nor did the fact, when we went together in the morning to bathe, that in taking a *header* he always somehow or other managed to place himself wrong side upwards in the air, alighting in the water on a part of his person that was far removed from his head. But he was a fisherman. He owned at least two fly rods and several books full of flies. Those rods and those fly books, and his talk of four-pound sewen in Welsh waters, settled the fact that in whatever other ways I might spend my life, an alarmingly great portion of it should be devoted to the pursuit of *Salmonidæ*. I don't fancy that tutor was a heaven-born teacher of matters apart from those piscatorial, nor indeed should I deem him a success as a fisher of men, which he became

Sporting Recollections

later on. But I owe him gratitude in enormous measure for inculcating into my nature such an intense love of "the gentle art," and I thank him from my heart for the unbounded pleasure that the pursuit of it has afforded me, for the innumerable friendships to which it has led, and for the countless wanderings through the very loveliest regions of many lands that have resulted in putting strength and vigour into my frame.

Poor little Darent ! sweetest of Kentish streams ! I sigh as I look upon your attenuated waters, your lifeless shallows, and think of the days that are no more, when the mill-head was alive with rising trout and every pool held its quota of shining denizens. Now the Water Companies have robbed you of fully half your stream, and the fœtid flow from tarred roads has asphyxiated all your poor fish. If, perchance, here and there one wretched trout yet remains in your far from pellucid waters, he must indeed originally have been a "lusty" fellow and endowed with the constitution of a conger eel to have succeeded in surviving the condemnable—to put it politely—insults that have been thrust upon him. Poor wretch ! Last summer I saw, to my infinite sorrow, a couple of trout that had been picked up from a backwater on the Darent where they had lain gasping and dying. They should have weighed well over twenty ounces

Of an Old 'Un

each. They were not half that weight and were black, unwholesome, gruesome bodies, and repulsive to look upon. When I think of the scores—nay, hundreds—of the lovely bright beauties that I have taken from those waters, and then meditate on what the existing denizens of them—if indeed there remain even one alive—are like to-day, it makes my heart sink within me and my stomach feel sadly rebellious.

From all I hear—and I know the Darent intimately well from Westerham to Dartford, and have in the course of my life fished almost every yard of it—there is not one single trout left in its waters that a god-fearing angler would willingly touch with the tip of a finger, and still less put into his creel. It is, indeed, most wofully sad! Arises the question, Can nothing be done? Will the riparian owners calmly and smilingly submit to this most horrible state of affairs?

I heard not long ago that the owner of what I think used to be the very best stretch of the Darent was most bitterly and justly indignant at his fishing being utterly, and as I fear hopelessly, ruined. To my certain knowledge a few years ago that fishing was worth £300 a year. It is now not worth one farthing. Again I say, can nothing be done? Is it possible that in a country like this, that is so excellently well governed

Sporting Recollections

(N.B.—We are very conservative in West Kent), and in which the legislation is so perfect (to which cases of Morison, Archer-Shee, Edalji, Beck, Hammersley and many others bear ample witness) that one body of men is able to take certain steps according to their own wild wills and infinite wisdom which take some thousands of pounds per annum out of the pockets of another body of men, without their having any option or word to say in the matter?

I was, not many weeks ago, strolling through a Kentish village along side of which meanders the Darent. At the side of the road I saw endless barrels of tar-muck, which was being ladled out all over the surface of the road, the whole length of the village and beyond it on each side for some couple of miles, and which in due course with the next heavy rain would of course find its way into the stream. In the whole of that particular two miles the road and the stream are never a quarter of a mile away from each other, and not infrequently are almost touching, so much so that the sons of toil are in the habit of sitting at a certain place, on a rail at the side of the road, on Sabbath mornings, pipe in mouth, making free use of the river Darent as a spittoon. This, however, although it has gone on from very ancient times, has never done the very slightest injury to the river as a trout stream.

Of an Old 'Un

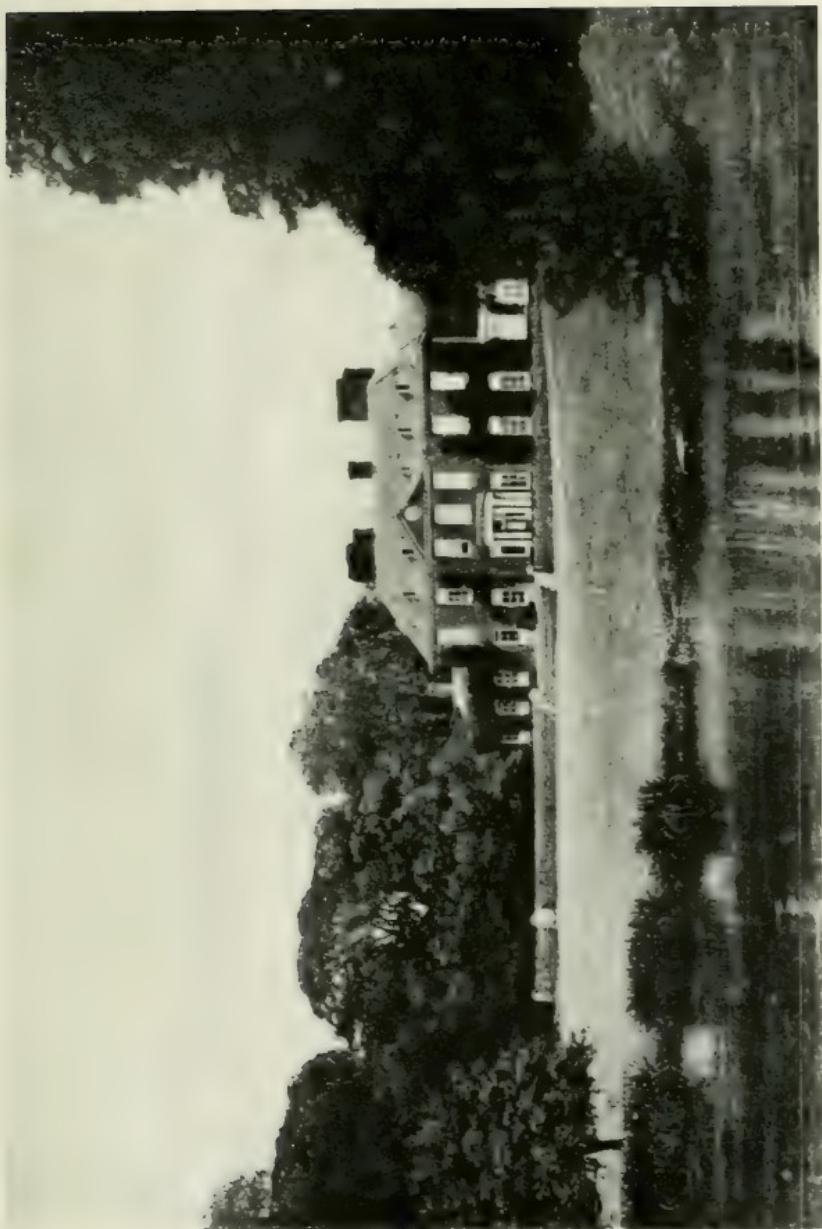
I caught my first trout in the Darent nearly sixty years ago. Which of us fails to remember his first trout, and I may add his first a-great-many-other things? but I fancy this subject has been lightly handled before. There are many wilder, rockier, more imposing streams than the little Darent; many with far deeper waters containing far more lordly fish; but there are few indeed, I fancy, that possess in a peaceful "home, sweet home" fashion a greater charm. Where the Darent rises and flows tinkling along through Squerryes Park, forming those pretty beech-shaded mill-ponds as he goes, could anything be more perfectly lovely than the vistas of chequered shade when the May sun is shining through the semi-transparent young beech leaves, when one sees the droves of tiny rabbits popping in and out of their holes, and hears the spotted woodpeckers rattling in the old beeches, and the weird cry of their green cousin as he flashes across the opening, and the crow of the old cock pheasant and the joyful flap of his wings? All right, my son, you shall receive attention six months hence, when your wives have brought their children to maturity and taught them to fly so grandly that they shall anon come rocketing down the wind over these lordly beeches, so high and so fast that even the very best of us shall rejoice when we see the head collapse and the wings

Sporting Recollections

cease their flight, as the poor bird comes down to earth with a thud. By the same token, O ye who shoot the cock pheasant, does he flap his wings in the springtime before he crows or afterwards?

On the bark of one of those aforesaid grand old beeches the late Napoleon III cut his initials years and years ago, at the time when he was a sojourner at Brasted Place, a couple of miles down the valley, when he was living in peace and retirement, far from scenes where later he realized to the full how there "the gravest citizen seems to lose his head" in more ways than one perchance, and "revolts, revolutions, republics" ensue. That same grand old tree succumbed to the wintry blast, but the slab of bark on which the Emperor's knife inscribed the "L. N." still survives among the antiquarian treasures of Squerryes Court.

We have been hearing, too, a great deal about Westerham lately in connection with General Wolfe, who was born there, and there lived for some years in his youth. Only a short time ago, did not the greatest soldier of our time, that "great little, grand little man Bobs bahadur," as one Terence Mulvaney delighted to call him, stand through a snow-storm in Westerham market-place, and while uncovering the memorial of the soldier of the Heights of Abraham fame, say many very graceful and well-expressed things



SUTTEY'S COURT, WESTHAM

Photo: F. T. Hughes

Of an Old 'Un

about him? I don't remember that anything was said about General Wolfe having caught trout in the Darent in his boyhood, but who can doubt that such an exceptionally enterprising soldier was a cunning fisherman also? As the Darent flowed through the garden of the very place where he was born, can we doubt for one moment that about the year 1732 he might have been seen with a hazel switch, and a length of thread with a bent pin on the end of it, pulling out sticklebacks with shouts of triumph?

My own first trout from the Darent, or indeed elsewhere, was caught at the opposite end of the village, and I fear was secured in anything but a legitimate manner, but, as will be shown, the method was wholly justifiable. Also it must not be forgotten that I was only eight or nine years old at the time.

I was fishing for perch in one of the Squerryes ponds one afternoon, when a small urchin out of the village told me he knew where there was a trout lying not far off, and took me down to the very last house at the west end of the village. Opposite this house was a ditch, which contained water at times, but in very dry weather held none. When there was water therein, it eventually found its way to the Darent, so we'll call it one of the numerous head-waters thereof, please. Spanning this trickle was a little brick

Sporting Recollections

bridge under which was a tiny pool, at the outside eighteen inches deep. In this tiny pool, puddle if you will, there lay that excellent boy's trout, and not a bad one. If disturbed he went out of sight under the bridge, but returned in a moment and remained poised in the gently moving current. I tried a worm. Not a bit of it! He wouldn't look at it. Paid not the very slightest attention. Did not even move when it touched his cheek. I fancy he had seen worms, not unconnected with a boy, previously. This gave me pause. Can a boy of eight have pause? I am well aware he can have cheek. I then crawled gently on to the bridge and lay with my nose not two feet from that of the trout below me. Half his body was clear of the brickwork. If a paragraph from *The Field*, which periodical was, I think, in its infancy in those days, had been printed on that trout's side, I could have read every word of it with much ease. What a situation for a child of eight, as keen as ten thousand acres of mustard, who had never yet caught a trout, but was blessed wishful. I got hold of my line, stripped the worm from the hook and slowly, slowly, lowered that same towards the trout's gleaming side. It reached him, it touched his side, it went beneath it, and there was a switch and it was in him! It held manfully, and after a little

Of an Old 'Un

desperate splashing I was able to hoist him out on to the bank. His end was peace. Weight one pound and seven ounces, *and* I am unashamed ! nay, rather, I glory over that one trout more than over the ninety-and-nine just persons, I mean the tens of thousands of fish taken since with orthodox lures, ranging from the fifty-pound Nansen salmon to innocent troutlings "guddled" for stocking purposes from tiny Kentish brooklets.

But I hadn't heard the last of that trout. A few days afterwards I got a messsage from "The Squire" of those days that he wanted me. "*So, boy ! I hear you've been poaching my trout.*" He was a very angry Squire indeed. I don't think I ever saw the old gentleman so *moved*. I don't remember that his wrath in any way either disturbed or distressed me ; why should it ? But what did distress me very much indeed was that the spiteful old gentleman wholly withdrew my permission to catch perch or indeed anything else in any of the waters of his kingdom. That, indeed, rent my very heartstrings in twain. In his lifetime that permission was never renewed, but when other and very much kinder people succeeded and reigned in his stead, all was well, and has indeed so remained through the long vista of years that have passed away since my first trout died. As a matter of fact, the trout I had inveigled—inveigled is, I think, a more

Sporting Recollections

ladylike word than poached—no more belonged to that dear old irate Squire than it did to me or the village “softie,” unless the highroad was his property. But no matter ! It’s too late a day now to adjust these piscatorial discrepancies, and perhaps the addresses of some of the persons concerned might engender complications.

“ He makes sweet music with the enamelled stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage.
And so by many winding nooks he strays
With willing sport to the wild ocean.”

I never read these lines without thinking of the dear little Darent, and what it has been in the days of the past, when its glistening shallows were paved with gravel that was golden in the sunlight, and its waters, that were clear, innocuous and sweet-savour'd, held trout—aye, indeed, and plenty of them—that were bright, healthy and well-shaped fish. All that is passed, and as far as the river itself is concerned it has been turned into a malodorous ditch, while its waters carry little but tarry filth and putrescence down to the ocean.

Truly its surroundings are, in some places, where the hand of the builder has lacked power to intrude, as lovely as ever. The magnificent cedars, probably among the finest in Great Britain, of Combe Bank—first home of electric

Of an Old 'Un

light in England—still wave their wide-spreading branches aloft, and the ancient oaks of Lullingstone still whisper weird tales to us of the past.

Who among us can look down the Shoreham Valley at sunset on a peaceful summer evening and hear the distant sound of the Otford bells, "the lowing herd," the "drowsy tinklings," and then in the gloaming the churr of the poor persecuted nightjar, persecuted of fools and fools only, because, forsooth ! some howling idiot of the past christened the lovely, innocent creature "night hawk," without dreaming of that "island valley of Avilion, where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, nor ever wind blows loudly"? Yes, such scenes as these—and there are many in "Glen Darent"—make us think of poor King Arthur's country, where it is "deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns and bowery hollows crowned with summer sea." In that land "beyond these voices," let us hope, the lovely Guinevere has sprung to him and claimed him hers, and that he has at last healed him of his grievous wound.

As time went on my fishing career developed, and I got chances of casting my flies, yes ! and perchance other lures into waters far removed from the dear little Darent. A long summer, when I was about ten or eleven, found me fishing many German streams. I was with my

Sporting Recollections

people, and was allowed to wander about alone and unrestrained all over the country at my own wild will. A most excellent education. At Langen-Schwalbach I very soon found a nice-looking little stream in which I ascertained dwelt in pristine innocence trout, grayling and chub. It required no conjurer to make them change their element. They may possibly have seen some weird German abortions of things called flies that I had observed in a gun-maker's window, but from the avidity with which they accepted my more seductive ones supplied by Farlow, I imagine they had never had a decently tied fly presented to their notice before.

In all my wanderings I was never interfered with but once. I was fishing in a lovely mill-tail a few miles down that pretty little Schwalbach stream, and had caught some eight or ten decent trout and grayling, which were lying on the grass beside me. Then to me entered the miller, a ponderous person of some twenty stone, pipe in mouth and basket in hand. He stooped, with difficulty I grant, and transferred every one of my fish to his basket, and giving me a nod walked back to his mill without a word, and I saw him no more. Alas ! not yet had I any command of that German tongue so prolific in swear-words ; not yet had my little fists learned to hold their own when their owner

Of an Old 'Un

was interfered with in his fishing operations, nefarious or otherwise, in the streams of the Fatherland. As time went on, however, my tongue I fancy, became quite expert in the use of choice expletives in German and many other languages, and my little fists became larger and harder and were able to give lessons in the noble art of self-defence to obese millers and other interfering folk. After I had been so "fairly downrightly robbed," to quote my old friend Soapy Sponge, of my fish by that greedy fat man, I was too depressed to fish any more and probably be robbed again, so I wandered off home and sought advice. In due course we found that we knew the owner of the stream. He most kindly gave me in writing the freest permission to fish the whole of his water. He also stated on such permission that any one interfering with me in any way would "catch it." To the owner of that stream be peace ! May he repose on the softest of sofas and in the brightest of bowers, and may many sirens stand by to bring him drinks, and soothe him with rapturous melodies on golden harps !

After Schwalbach the Neckar, with scarcely a trout in it and no grayling at all. So I was reduced to chub, and only small ones. I don't think I got any of more than a pound and a half. There were some "whackers" in the river,

Sporting Recollections

I know, for I saw them for sale in the market, and, moreover, years afterwards, when I could fairly well hold my own even with a Neckar boatman in his riverside lingo, I helped to net scores of them up to four and five pounds in weight. I daresay they could have been caught by any skilful angler who knew how to catch chub. I most certainly didn't, nor do I know any more about it to-day than I did then.

I remember a day many years ago, when, far away from the Rhineland, I caught some chub, about twenty trout and a whopping great eel. That gives the show away. Yes, I confess it, I was fishing with worms in the very bushy places, but I caught all the trout with flies, and on the whole had an uncommonly jolly day.

When we are travelling north, about ten miles from Carlisle on the Caledonian Railway, close to a station called Gretna, a little river called the Sark can be plainly seen as it flows under the railway. Yes, it is the same Gretna that we have so often read of in connection with galloping horses, impetuously planned journeys, and hurried marriage ceremonies; the same Sark that gave the name "Scott o' the brig" to the easy officiator who tied the nuptial knot. The river Sark for some miles is the boundary between England and Scotland, and it was possible in the days of which I write to fill a good-

Of an Old 'Un

sized creel with the denizens of its waters. For all I know to the contrary it may be so still. I only fished it on that single occasion, and I don't know why I did so at all, for I had at that time scores and scores of miles of infinitely better fishing all over the Border country at my disposal. I can only suppose that all the larger rivers were in high spate.

I referred a little way back to a big eel. I got him out, and he lay on the bank twisting my line after the manner of his kind into hopeless and slimy tangles. I hate eels, *i.e.* except Test eels, and on a plate—boiled first to take the grease out, then fried, and then on the plate ; and after that meal away to the banks of that same well-beloved Test with a rod and line, and on the end of it what the gods in their fishy wisdom may direct—olive dun, hare's ear, quill gnat, or perchance a Mayfly. I would sooner, much sooner, handle an adder than an eel. I therefore told my ghillie for the day, a lad of sixteen, to take it off the hook. He looked at me in utter disgust, spat on the ground and spake : " Me ! I'll no touch the muckle brute ! "

On the subject of eels I may possibly give the youthful and enterprising angler a tip. The mature angler, unless he be, like me, a confirmed poacher, will care for none of these things, also he will prefer to keep dry. When we are fishing

Sporting Recollections

a small stream that turns occasional mill-wheels, we shall usually find flowing from the mills small side streams. I have often noticed in the middle of the day, probably the dinner-hour, that these are at their lowest. If the sun is out and you carefully examine the small pools of two or three feet deep, you will see eels wriggling about on the bottom. A hook on a piece of string and a foot or two of stick will easily do the rest, and half a creelful of the slimy but nutritious beasts is provided.

Confession, they say, is good for the soul, and that's all right. Then I will at once confess that I am an innate poacher, but at the same time a legitimate one. I have never to the best of my remembrance taken a fish, either salmon or trout, in any unorthodox method without the full approval and cognizance of the owner thereof. I have inveigled many a salmon, and I have tickled scores of trout, but never a single one but at the request of the owner of the fishing. I honestly believe that the owners have taken, if possible, even more delight in the varied but nefarious proceedings than I have myself.

Some years ago, when some relations of mine were living at a place on the Darent, before mentioned, called Combe Bank, some three miles below Westerham, there had been a good deal of talk about tickling trout. The general opinion

Of an Old 'Un

seemed to be that the successful tickling of trout did not exist, that it was just talk and nothing else. I was asked what I thought about it. I smiled benignly and offered to demonstrate, not what I *thought* about it, but what I *knew*. Shortly afterwards we assembled on the bank of the river. There were present Hughie Spottiswoode, the owner of Combe Bank ; Count de Baillet, the tenant of house, shooting and fishing ; our friend Stephen Marchant and the head keeper. So it is evident that this thing was not done in a corner. I got into the water at a certain pool, where was an old alder stump with a perfect tangle of roots at a bend in the stream. The pool, as I well knew, contained many trout, which invariably when disturbed fled for shelter to the roots. I walked all over the pool, which was about up to my hips, to frighten the fish to their holts, and then proceeded to feel about in the roots. I found many trout, and handed out about a dozen, in size from four to twenty-four ounces, from that one corner. I knew pretty well where all the fish in the stream lay, and where the best hiding-places were.

It is not at all difficult to catch trout in that manner, not nearly so much so as people seem to think. When trout are worried, harried about, and frightened they, so to speak, sit exceedingly close, and it is an easy matter, as a rule, to get

Sporting Recollections

one's fingers round them and hold them firmly and surely. But one has to get very wet indeed. It is perfectly useless to try and tickle trout successfully without getting into the water. I was in the stream on that particular afternoon for about three hours, and was blue with cold when I had finished. I was often, when groping in under the banks feeling for fish in rat-holes and other hiding-places, entirely submerged, head and all. Yes, it was uncommonly cold work. I must, however, admit that the spectators appeared to be well entertained, and were by no means backward in applauding. I got out altogether very nearly fifty fish, of which a very few of the best were sent away as presents. These were all over a pound in weight. All the rest were returned to the stream.

I remember, after that watery episode, I found my way with Hughie Spottiswoode to the King's Arms at Westerham to join in with the "Authenticities" for cricket. I got warm again by bedtime, which was, as usual in that festive crowd, none too early. That was by far the longest and coldest innings I ever had tickling trout. But I was never the least the worse for a moment.

I was once walking along the bank of the Darent with the owner of that particular part of the country, when he scoffingly asked me if I

Of an Old 'Un

had ever heard anything about this "infernal rot" as to tickling trout. I asked him, "Shall I show you what I believe about it?" I went to a little pool close by, got into it—it was barely above my knees, but I knew it held several half-pound trout—stirred it up well, and then stooped down and felt about a bit in under the bank. In but few seconds I stood upright again with a trout in each hand, saying at the same time, "That's what I *believe*, old man, about tickling trout." "Well, I *am* d——d!" was his only and perchance somewhat too previous exclamation.

One more tickling episode, a most unfortunate and unsatisfactory one, and we will leave the poor trout in peace. I was with my old and cheery friend Jack Hervey, a friend of more years than he, at any rate, will care to think of, and of endless sporting episodes, at Hadlow. There is a stream there which at the time contained a few, a very few trout; but they were "whoppers." Jack pulled me out of bed at some ungodly hour in the morning, four I believe it was, and took me off to the river to search for and try to tickle one of these whoppers. Think of it, please! A chilly morning although in summer, before sunrise, and I was asked to get into a river nearly—in places quite—up to my armpits and search among roots, under banks,

Sporting Recollections

and in watery recesses for big though somewhat mythical fishes. Now, wonderful to relate, after about an hour I found one and ran him to earth, so to speak, among some roots. Yes, he was a "whopper" all right, nearer four pounds than three, I should say—for, alas! I never weighed him. I got my trusty eight fingers and two thumbs round him and held him as firm as a rock, and could so have held him until the day of judgment. But woe is me, I grasped, as well as the trout, a root as thick as my finger, and could not get him away. "A knife, Jack, a knife for Gawd's sake, or we are all lost." Jack had no knife and mine was right away down below there in my breeches pocket, and if any one will kindly tell me how I could have got it out with both my hands most fully occupied in holding the fish—and the blessed root—I shall be obliged. So I had to let him go! No, I couldn't find the brute again, although I carefully groped my way round every corner of the pool. I should think he went on swimming swiftly away down-stream till he struck the Thames at Sheerness.

I can recall yet another episode in connection with tickling trout in the Darent, and it has been one of the great sorrows of my life that I was not *particeps criminis*. Although I was not present I heard of all that occurred during that

Of an Old 'Un

particular mudlark, not only from poor old Ned McNiven himself, who was in the centre of the stage, but also from the other actors and spectators. There were present George Pyne, one of the best fishermen who ever threw line into the Irish Blackwater ; Horlock, one of the finest and most intrepid horsemen of his day, who down in the West Country jumped his black horse over the two railway gates on to and off the line, and afterwards became a most wonderfully good and successful missionary in the wilds of North America, where I believe he died ; old John Board was there, too, well known as a regular follower of the Surrey staghounds in the days of Squire Heathcote, and later on old Tom Nickalls, the West Kent and the old Surrey foxhounds. One of my brothers was also present. I had the details from all of them, and personally I believe every word of it. The reader can do just exactly what he —— well, pleases. Is it the least probable that a man who, just for a lark—his last, alas !—and with a laugh drove over a bank and ditch standing upright in his dog-cart, would be the least backward over exploring the depths of a pool in the little Darent ? The pool to my certain knowledge was about six or seven feet deep and held many trout. McNiven wanted those trout. They were stowed away in under the bank

Sporting Recollections

somewhere near the bottom and he couldn't reach them. So what did the raving lunatic do but persuade two of his companions to hold him by the legs head downwards while he grovelled about with his hands after the fish. Anon he kicked furiously and was duly raised on to the bank again, firmly grasping a trout in each hand.

Before I proceed to relate a few more trifling adventures and experiences in connection with legitimate fishing, I think it would be well, and at the same time ease my soul a good deal, if I cast behind me at once, at any rate some of the less legitimate contests I have had—some successful, some very much the contrary—with the denizens of the deep.

“Snatching” big carp is by no means bad sport and requires a certain amount of craft. I have not, I regret to say, the pleasure of the acquaintance of any carp-fisher. If I had I should assure him, on the sacred word of a brother li—, I mean fisherman, that nothing on earth should induce me to “snatch” or capture by any nefarious process even a carp or any other equally unattractive monster, if there was the least chance of my interfering with the sport of any legitimate angler. I have the most intense admiration for the infinite patience evinced and skill displayed in the methods of the carp-fisher

Of an Old 'Un

ere he can hope to be successful in his sport. Is a carp good to eat? He doesn't look it. I have never tried, and God forbid I ever should. I should expect very shortly to swell and anon to drop down dead. No, I don't eat 'em, but when by some nefarious process I have succeeded in securing two or three of the wily brutes, I usually take them to the nearest young tame pheasants, hang them up in adjacent trees, so that from them anon shall drop many maggots, and in death they are blessed which in life were so eminently unattractive.

But how to circumvent the wily *Cyprinus*? Take unto you an ordinary spinning-rod and line, and on the end of the main line affix three large salmon hooks back to back; to the bend of any one of the hooks tie eighteen inches of thread with a cork at the end; on to your main line at spaces three, six and nine feet from the hooks bite three No. 6 shot. Are you beginning to twig? No? Not yet? Well then, we'll get on. Then, having obtained full permission from the owner of the water where you propose to carry out your most nefarious scheme, it being a bright summer day, June for choice, go and stand on the bank where the water in front of you is fairly deep, and watch. You will soon be aware of weird, dimly seen, ghostly great forms swimming along before you, appearing,

Sporting Recollections

disappearing, and appearing again. Now to work ! Cast forth your line some distance in front of one of these dim forms, and you will observe that your hooks are kept near the surface, while there is a sunken belly in your line, and over this, if you have not been clumsy, your carp will assuredly swim. At the supreme moment pull, my son ! pull like blazes, and if all is well you will find yourself stuck in a carp of whatever weight you choose to put him at. I grant the victory is not worthy of record in history, but I place the sport of snatching carp a long way in front of catching dozens of three-ounce roach from a punt, even when you take into consideration the wicker-covered jar that reposes at your side.

There was a small Hampshire stream very much overgrown in which years ago I was allowed to work my wild will to the uttermost. As this stream was once a year systematically netted with a pole-net, and all the fish kept and given away by the owner, there was no occasion to be bashful. There was a certain culvert about thirty inches in diameter and ten yards in length, blocked at the end by a hatchway, and in passing this one day I saw some trout disappear into its recesses. Now the question that arose in my mind was, what becomes of those trout ? I would very soon find out. I stripped to the

Of an Old 'Un

waist and proceeded to explore. I found that by turning my head sideways I could just breathe, but only just, for the water was very near the top of the brickwork. I crawled on and on along the weird and watery way, and as I neared the end, hurrah ! there were my trout right enough with their noses all up against the wooden hatchway. Of course they could have evaded me easily enough by darting past me and so back into the river, but that method of escape didn't seem to strike them. Back I crawled and got my landing-net. Armed with that I set to work. Directly I got a fish into it I pressed the net against the top of the culvert and so crawled back with him safely. I had to get them one by one. There were nine of them and I got the lot, and they were about three-quarters of a pound apiece. While I was thus engaged with the trout a water-rat and an eel tried to pass me and I annexed both of them. By the time I had finished I was stiff all over, but it was an entirely novel mode of trout-fishing and amusing withal.

If this account ever catches the eye of one "Ballygunge," who was in those days a great friend of mine, he will, I fancy, laugh a good deal, but not so vociferously as he did at the time, for he was sitting close by looking on at the performance, and at the end of the day took

Sporting Recollections

away his share of the trout. I have no recollection, however—no, not the slightest—of his making any offer at all as to doing his share of crawling along that subterranean waterway.

At the top of the Compton Water on the Test, close alongside of that beautiful pool formed by the main stream from Bossington as it flows under the bridge, is a most peculiar hole. It appears to be made by a very strange subterranean flow of water, of unknown depth, and comes to the surface bubbling up as clear as crystal. At the top of this peculiar flow of water lived a trout of about four pounds—as a matter of fact he was three pounds and thirteen ounces. He was even in those waters of shy fish the most absolutely wary old fellow I ever had to deal with. A glimpse of a shining rod over your shoulder, a footfall of ordinary weight on the bank within twenty yards of him, would send him off to the unknown depths of his lair like a flash of lightning. When undisturbed this peculiar fish always, so to speak, stood on his head, his nose pointing to the depths from which the current flowed, and his tail waving backwards and forwards close to the surface of the water. Eyes in his tail he did not possess, as I discovered later, but his crafty habits and the marvellous rapidity of his sight would lead one to think otherwise.

One morning my host, Tom Mann (no rela-

Of an Old 'Un

tive, verily, of him who has lately on Tower Hill—yes, and for some days elsewhere *in retirement!*—been so prominently before the public), one of the very finest dry-fly fishermen I ever knew, and I had most carefully stalked to within range of, and were watching that fish, who as usual was standing on his head. “D—n that fish!” remarked my companion, “I hate the sight of him, always lying there wrong side up and not a bit of good to anybody. Can’t you get the brute out, old man? Surely you can think of some of your infernal poaching dodges to circumvent him.” “Oh yes,” I replied, “I can get him out all right in the course of the next few days if you wish it; but—” I added with a wink, “it won’t be with a dry fly, you know.”

I made my plans forthwith. I took a willow wand and a piece of string with three salmon hooks lapped on the end, which I bound on to the wand. I then covered the whole thing lightly over with weeds and fixed it in the hole so that the hooks were invisible in the weed, but were close to where the fish was usually watching for what the upward flow of the stream might bring him. It brought him just a little more than he expected. A day or two after I had placed my trap I crawled very stealthily up to the side of the hole, and inch by inch raised

Sporting Recollections

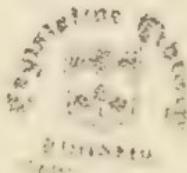
my grass-adorned cap above the level of the water. Yes, he was there right enough, and his beautiful white belly and spotted side lay unprotected not three inches away from the hooks. I had half a mind to retire from the contest and let him go, for I felt sure that he was mine. But although he was indeed a lovely fish he was no earthly good to any one in that hole, and was better out of it. Gently, gently, I put out my hand, took hold of my willow wand, gave one sharp snatch and had him. A more absolutely perfect fish I never saw, not even from the radiant reaches of the silver Test. In due course I took him to the fishing hut and laid him out on the marble slab. All poor dear old Tom Mann had to say about it after all my patience and craft was: "Well, Stretty, you are the d——t old poacher I ever came across!"

Now, does the following story come under the heading of poaching, or otherwise? I fancy it might be called "illegitimate angling in alien waters." It had certainly a very close connection with a basket. I was one day fishing the Itchen at Bishopstoke with one Hugh Bellamy. We had partaken of lunch at the little village inn, and were seated in an upper chamber, smoking our pipes in much peace, and watching the stream as it flowed along by the high-road below us. A carrier's van came creaking down

Of an Old 'Un

the village street, and pulled up exactly beneath our window. The carrier, good soul, got down, and after the manner of his kind passed within the welcome portals for a quencher—more power to his elbow!—leaving his van unattended. On the top of the van, not more than six or seven feet below us, sat a large wicker basket full of ladies' pretty things on their way home from the washerwoman. Yes; they were much too light for masculine attire. I lay me down on the window-sill, and inch by inch the trusty Hugh lowered me down towards that basket by the ankles. I seized it in my hands, and was safely pulled once more, basket and all, into that upper chamber. In due course, the carrier came out wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, mounted his van and drove away. Then we also, having paid our bill at the bar, took our departure, leaving that blessed basket sitting in the middle of the room. Alas! I know nothing more. But I would have given much to have seen that carrier's face when, having duly arrived at the house where he was wont to deposit that weekly basketful of feminine frillies, he looked on the top of his van and found it void.

I once heard of a very peculiar fish being gaffed in the waters of the Shin in Sutherland, and this fish was no other than my dear old



Sporting Recollections

friend Redvers Buller—peace to his memory ! Many is the night that we have lain side by side on Mother Earth when engaged in hunting Kafir braves among the kloofs and krantzes of the Amatola mountains. Verily he was one of the bravest men I ever knew, the staunchest of friends, and, they tell me, the hardest of masters. I, at any rate, never found him so. And one day he fell prone into the perilous waters of the Shin. I had the account of this adventure from the lips of the very ghillie himself who had cleeked the gallant soldier from that rushing torrent. It is given to but few Scotch henchmen to save a full-blown general with endless letters after his name—including those coveted two “for valour”—from, perchance, a rocky and watery grave, by gaffing him in the seat of the breeches and dragging him safely and surely to land. The adventure had evidently left a very sweet savour in the nostrils of that ghillie ; and as I sat outside the hostel at Inveran, watching the lovely river flowing by with occasional bars of silver leaping from its depths, it most evidently was with no small pleasure that he related the somewhat large share in it that had fallen to his lot. I would indeed that the gallant soldier were among us once more, and in full vigour to cast his lures, or even himself, yet once again into the

Of an Old 'Un

rapids of the Shin, or, better still, into his own well-loved waters of Devon.

My before-mentioned host, one S—M, on a certain occasion summoned me unto him to go and fish a very good salmon river in Ireland. He had taken it for the months of April and May, and when we took it over it was already at midsummer level, and the weather, though most entrancing for the tourist, was hopelessly depressing for the poor salmon-fisher. In our first week we managed to circumvent three fish by legitimate methods, *i.e.* if you are so generous as to consider that shrimps *are* legitimate methods. After that, it was hopeless—wholly and utterly hopeless—and we gave way to quoits, losing a few dozen golf-balls in unmown grass, and reading inferior periodicals, accompanied by a ceaseless flow of language that left a good deal to be desired. The river shrank and shrank day by day, carrying on its bosom, as it meandered slowly and solemnly by, household relics from the cottages above—perchance a worn-out besom, Molly Maguire's discarded petticoat, Patsy's lost caubeen minus his pipe, and a few dead kittens and puppies. We had hopes of hooking a defunct baby, but were disappointed. Indeed, at one time towards the end of our sojourn, such a varied assortment of filth and rubbish of many kinds came floating

Sporting Recollections

down-stream, that we were not altogether without hope that we might one morning discover a drowned home-ruler hitched up by the seat of his ragged breeches in a willow stump. If we had done so, we should, of course, have held our noses, poled him out into the stream, and let him pass along to other scenes. But, alas ! we had no luck under the heading "Home Rule."

One evening S—M remarked that he was sick of it, and should be off to Punchestown races on the morrow, and stay away for a day or two. He also added a few remarks about the fishing of a distinctly blasphemous and inapplicable nature. He asked if I would come too. I was grateful, but declined. "But, my dear chap, what will you do to amuse yourself while I'm away ?" he asked. I replied that I would *fish*. At which he snorted. Then I added, "Look here, I'll bet you a sovereign I catch a salmon before ever you get to Dublin." "The devil doubt you will, you poaching old villain, as soon as ever my back is turned." And so, after breakfast, clad in garments suitable for the classic race-meeting rather than for the riverside, he took his way for the railway station and, later, the races.

In due course when he reached Dublin he went straight to his hotel, and there found a

Of an Old 'Un

telegram awaiting him. There were two words only written on it. They ran simply "Got him." It was quite enough to explain the whole situation to S—M. I would that I could have seen his face as he read it.

Later in the day I was strolling along the river-bank very slowly and cannily, and became aware of a salmon lying apparently asleep in the shade close under me. Down I went on my tummy, crawled along to the bank above him, and put my head inch by inch over his nose. I could see his fins and his scales and all that was his just as plainly as if I had had him on a dish on the table. I put my rod on the bank "con-vaneant"—as Pat would say—and took the line in my hand, and there happened to be a salmon hook at the end of it. Slowly and gently I lowered it under his gill and twitched it in just as easily as I could have put my fork into an oyster. He woke up just about as quickly as a slumbering schoolboy wakes when you chuck a jugful of cold water into his bed in the middle of the night. He made one tremendous rush right across the river and threw himself out on the other bank. But he was soon in again, and in due course came to the gaff, and was about twenty pounds. When S—M returned from Punchestown he was anxious to be initiated into some of my methods. I showed him one

Sporting Recollections

or two, and I rather think that on one occasion he went so far as to rouse a salmon that was soundly sleeping in the shade with a phantom, a piece of lead and a triangle or so. So suddenly was that salmon awakened, so wild and frantic were his rushes, and so abnormal were his antics that the amusement was enormous. Altogether we caught five, and only five, by these somewhat peculiar methods, and I think we were moderate. They were all caught with rod, hook and line. Can I say fairer? The rent of the river for the two months was very nearly £200. During more than half that time the water was left without a rod on it, as it was perfectly useless. Surely he would be a very exacting critic indeed who would grudge one half a dozen salmon at a cost in rent alone of over £30 apiece. I verily believe that during that most abnormally dry summer, had an expert angler who knew all the tricks of the trade happened to be on the spot, and seen fit he could sooner or later have caught every fish in that particular stretch of the river.

CHAPTER IX

South Hampshire chalk streams, but more especially the Test—

One John and his little ways—A drive with John—A sail with John—John's breeches—Punt gunning with John, not if I know it—God bless his lordship's steam launch—Memories of the past in South Hampshire—More Test—Poor dry-fly men can't catch trout unless they see them “splashing about”—General Blowhard, (1) as a fisherman, (2) as a puntman, (3) as a liar, but the greatest of these is Number 3—Some whackers of the Test—Three lambs at Chilbolton.

THERE were at one time a good many salmon diseased with “fungus” in a certain very deep pool in the river Lyon near Fortingal in Perthshire. The late Sir Donald Currie's head keeper Ford had implored me to get out, by any means, as many of these brutes as I possibly could. One bright sunny day, when legitimate fishing was quite hopeless, I was endeavouring to locate diseased fish with a view to “snatching them.” While lying on a rock peering down into the depths of the black water below me I became aware of a white patch about as big as half a crown wandering slowly to and fro some twelve feet below me. Of course, although at that depth I could not distinguish a sign of the fish itself, I knew well it was a patch of fungus

Sporting Recollections

on a salmon's head. I sat down and carefully rigged on to the end of my main line the three biggest salmon hooks I could find among my kit back to back. I fixed a tiny bit of my pocket-handkerchief about the size of two postage stamps on to one of the hooks, so that I could see in the deep water the exact position of my dastardly weapon, and pulled the line through the rings until the deadly contraption sat tight against the top of the rod. Gently, gently I lowered the point towards the white patch that was still sailing about below me until I felt the side of the fish. I lowered a little farther and got the point of the rod in under him so that I gradually lost sight of my tiny white guide. Then I gave a jerk and was in him. He fought well and was over twenty pounds, and but for his one white patch was clean and well-looking.

My worthy host made use of some opprobrious epithets as regards "stroke hauling," but was anon more than anxious to take a hand himself. In the first place, however, I couldn't get him to distinguish the fish, and when he could twig one he always bungled it, for he was a numb hand at fishing, legitimate or otherwise. Snatching salmon is not learned in ten minutes. It is not given to every one to scale the heights of Olympus, nor to land salmon from the rivers

Of an Old 'Un

that water the plains around that historic mountain.

Were I to give details of all the streams I have fished or even their names, from the wilds of Norway to the distant lochs and rivers of Sutherland, and the more domestic but none the less lovely and crystal clear streams that flow into the Solent and help to bear away to those distant lands of the West and elsewhere the grand liners from Southampton, I should weary my poor readers almost as badly as would records of the catching of immature codlings, of baby whiting and "aiblins even a sardine" from Calais pier, or a bald unadorned list of trout taken by an angler from the Itchen, with merely their weights from the year eighteen hundred and God knows when to the present day. Ah me! the glorious fun I have had fishing, shooting, hunting, racing in that most lovely South Hampshire country: Paradise of trout fishers. Memories of the past come flooding across me. A book? Verily I could fill a shelf with cheery reminiscences of past sport and the friends that took part therein.

Some time ago I received a telegram on this wise: "Come along at once, peal are running." Now the sender of the telegram was one John, and the place where the peal were said to be running was the Beaulieu river in Hants. But the time was early June, and, as I well knew,

Sporting Recollections

peal-, *i.e.* sea-trout-, fishing in those waters did not usually commence until about the middle of July. I therefore cast an eye over the telegram from one John, not altogether without suspicion. Yes ! I knew John well and loved him greatly. I was also acquainted with his little ways, which were playful. Nevertheless I packed up my kit and some fishing-tackle and took my departure for the wilds of the New Forest. In due course I met him at the station and was far from surprised to observe a pawky smile on his youthful and ingenuous face as he greeted me.

" Well, John, and how about those peal ? They've started running pretty early this season, haven't they ? " I ventured to ask.

" Peal be blowed ! There ain't no peal or likely to be yet awhile," replied John, with his usual disregard of grammar, for not yet was he an editor. Then he continued : " But, you see, I am camping out in the Forest and want a mate, and I knew you'd come along if I put up that yarn about the peal. Wasn't absolutely certain you'd swallow it though," he added with a wink.

" Never mind, old man, we'll have a proper good mudlark all the same." N.B.—And we did.

On one occasion we went over to lunch at
274

Of an Old 'Un

Palace House, and when we got into the dining-room were aware of two wooden kitchen chairs at the table among the lordly red leather ones. "What's up, my lord?" asked John, pointing to the humble seats. Said my lord: "Now if you and Streatfeild are not wet through up to your necks, I'll most humbly apologize and you shall sit where you choose; but if you are, kitchen chairs for you both, my men." With these words he came up to me and felt my saturated shoulders. "Just so! I knew it!" said my lord. "Kitchen chairs, please, and no doubt about it."

John's father was just about the most charming man I ever had the privilege of meeting, and although a typical Scotchman, possessed a most abounding sense of humour, and was more than ready to grasp the comic side of everything. Woe is me, it must be a good deal more than forty years ago when I first had the pleasure of making friends with him, when we were both shooting with Carpenter-Garnier at Rookesbury. And John was a very tiny little John indeed in those days, and had not yet learned to play tricks with motor-cars, or, by the same token, to deceive his friends with idle and mendacious tales of non-existent fishes.

One morning John's father called to me as he stood looking out of the dining-room window

Sporting Recollections

and spake thusly : " Now, my dear Streatfeild, I ask you is that a suitable way for my son to go about his own village and among his own people ? " and as he spoke he pointed to the said John, who was at the moment strolling through the archway into the village. He was without a coat, and from the appearance of his nether attire the spectator might have thought with justice that he had been sitting day and night through the whole of his young life on the very hardest, the most adamantine of kitchen chairs, for there, displayed to our view, were two frayed apertures through which John might have thrust his best Sunday hat. I don't altogether wonder that his lordship turned away with a sigh.

John was a most expert wild-fowler, and down that same Beaulieu river has slain unnumbered hecatombs of fowl of all kinds, even down to a real wild flamingo which I well remember his securing. I have heard on the very best authority that his superior as a wild-fowler, with possibly the exception of Sir Ralph Payne Gallwey, does not exist, and I fully believe it. But oh ! John, John, where is that book on wild-fowling that you promised to write so many years ago, and for a sight of which your friends, your publishers, and your reviewers have looked and longed in vain ?

Of an Old 'Un

Years ago during one arctic winter John attempted—being in an exceedingly enterprising frame of mind—to get me along with a view to taking me out in a punt behind a very big gun, and initiating me in the art of punt gunning. Early on the morning of Christmas Day, after one of the coldest nights ever experienced in England, a punt was found near the mouth of the Beaulieu river bottom up, and inside it, underneath an enormous gun, was discovered the body of a middle-aged man frozen stiff and stark to the floor of the punt. The body was, after much trouble and the use of a great deal of hot water, removed from the boards of the punt and taken to Southampton to await an inquest. Now had I fallen in with John's views as to lessons in wild-fowling that body would most assuredly have been mine. No, thank you, John ! I took most particular and infinite care that it should not be. I am well aware that he used to appear at his home very frequently at hours ranging from twelve midnight up to, or is it down to, six a.m., when the thermometer was steady at somewhere about zero, frozen to the marrow, but bearing with him endless mallard, widgeon, teal, golden-eye, etc. John loved it. To me it would have been an exceedingly painful and I fancy lingering death.

Sporting Recollections

He once took me for a sail in their yacht. I suppose she was about twenty-five or thirty tons. We left Butler's Hard and sailed away down the river, all standing, or sitting, or lying, as the case may be—I know nothing whatever about it, but I know I have read somewhere about a yacht coming in “all standing.” I dare say it was in *Punch*, and maybe it contains a joke which I am too ignorant to appreciate. I will confess at once that beyond the saloon of an ocean-going steamer I know no more of nautical affairs than a pig does about snipe-shooting. There were also on board, that voyage, a lady and her husband, both exceedingly charming and in every way what they should be; also they possessed exactly the same knowledge of nautical matters that I did. I think we three passengers might indeed have been Faith, Hope and Charity, but the greatest of these was John. In my humble opinion his bravery in setting forth into the deep under such circumstances, and with a stiff breeze blowing, amounted to nothing short of the most reckless daring, for which he deserved the Victoria Cross.

John took the tiller. The rest of the crew took hold of, and pulled with might and main, at any rope that was described to them, *i.e.* as soon as they could grasp what part of the rigging was referred to. It was what might be likened

Of an Old 'Un

to indescribable chaos, and also without form and void. John talked of making for the Solent and cruising about that well-known region. My own belief was that if we had ever reached that most undesirable haven we should very shortly have been well outside the Needles and on the high-road to Finisterre, for the wind appeared to me to be not only decidedly contrary, but was, moreover, from the N.E. However, mercifully we never reached the waters of the Solent, but, on the contrary, the most blessed refuge of a mudbank, on which be peace, and on which we grounded. In their efforts to be accommodating and obedient John's crew pulled a rope too hard or too soft, or perchance it was the wrong one altogether, and amid a shower of most flowery nautical language from our skipper, on to the mudbank we sailed, stuck hard and fast, while personally I returned most heartfelt thanks to the sweet little cherub who sits up aloft to guard unwary and ignorant voyagers, who had thus timely supervened to eliminate that voyage to Finisterre from the proceedings.

Now the tide was rising—isn't flowing the correct term?—which was well. Also John's father and mother were returning from Southampton in a dear, delightful, blessed great steam launch, which was still better. Never have I loved a vessel with such a love as I felt

Sporting Recollections

towards that steam launch. She towed us off the mud, she took us on board, she gave us tea ; and her owner chaffed us as I think I never was chaffed either before or since, and upon my word and honour I think we had fairly earned it.

One more trip did I go with John which lingers yet in my memory, but it was on the more trustworthy element. I fail, however, to believe that any trip of any earthly description undertaken with John as either skipper of a ship, driver of an engine, Jehu of a hansom cab, or chauffeur of a car, can be without a very distinct element of peril to those who are under his guidance, for in all of these varied capacities have I been acquainted with John. I am, however, told that on the numerous occasions on which he has taken over very exalted personages into his charge his care and precaution have always been spoken of as absolutely exemplary.

John was electioneering and had a meeting at a village called Sowley, where was a great pond in which I fished for perch in the water while he angled for votes in mud. He took me to Sowley in a two-wheel dog-cart at a pace not exceeding some fifteen miles an hour. While he endeavoured to capture his votes and I my perch, the poor gee awaited us in an adjacent hostel, I fear none too free from draughts from his appearance when we started for

Of an Old 'Un

home. His trot left a great deal to be desired. "So, you old beggar," quoth John, "you can't trot, can't you? My word then, we'll see if you can gallop!" He not only could gallop, but did.

Between Sowley Pond and Palace House, Beaulieu, are many corners. I give you my word! we went round each of them in turn on but one wheel. No! luckily I am not nervous on wheels. I fancy, in those days at any rate, that any one who delivered himself over for a season to John as guide, protector and friend had better be without, wholly without, those most unsatisfactory adjuncts to the human anatomy. Were they still *in statu quo* I should have ventured to predict a very speedy cessation of all interest in mundane affairs for the unfortunate possessor thereof.

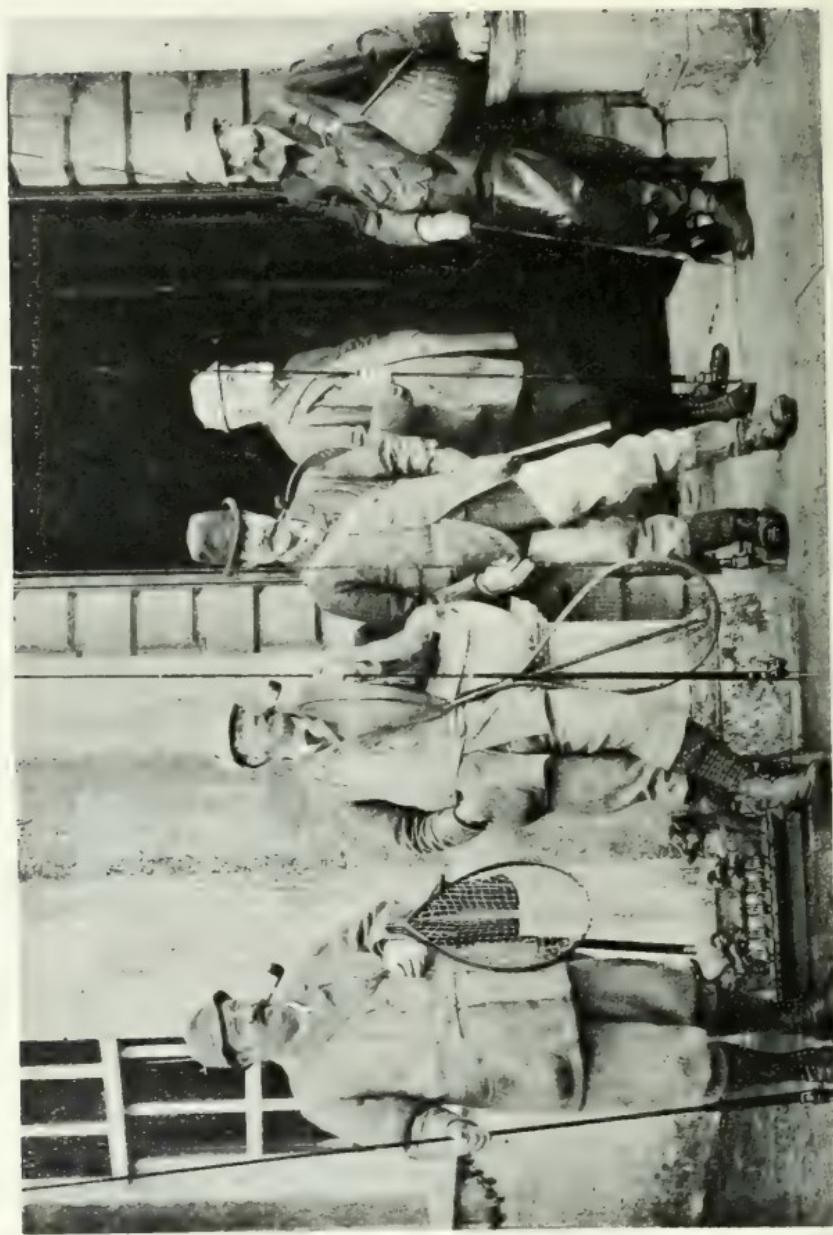
What fun, too, the Hambledon Hunt races were in those olden days, and long before the above most excellent sportsman had made his appearance on the scene. What numbers of well-known faces can I recall that were always to the fore on those occasions. Alas! too many will be seen no more. Poor old D'Albiac, "The Treasure," of undying fame, if not winner of a hundred fights, he was at any rate winner on endless occasions of a hundred yards. Never shall I forget one wild night in barracks at

Sporting Recollections

Chichester, when "The Treasure" sped to the winning-post like any greyhound, leaving most of us the victims of misplaced confidence in the strength of the "fizz" and the losers of many shekels. Poor "Pussie" Sanderson too, who has just passed away, and who with Charlie Radclyffe was always on hand. Arthur Yates, a little different in figure now to what he was in those days, but cheery as ever. Billy Greenwood too, who was usually infinitely more "done" at the finish of a race than his horse, but was indeed the broth of a boy and made the pace a bit too hot for the race of life. And that reminds me of old George Wilder at Stansted and his coach, always present at the Hambledon meeting, and hundreds more that are passed away, or only to be found in bath chairs or on crutches.

About the best of us all of those days, who is still hale and hearty, and looks it, is old Courtenay Tracy, who can still go with his otter-hounds from start to finish, and still enjoy his pipe and his whisky toddy. Good luck and longer life to him. It is over sixty years since he and I started hare-hunting together in West Kent, where he lived in those days, with a pack of four or five beagles, a couple of spaniels and a terrier, and the best of the lot was a black spaniel. Aye ! and we killed many a hare too.

During the last forty years I have had the
282



HERBERT EDLEMAN

THE AUTHOR

MOTTISFONT ARBEN
DAVID MEINERTZHAGEN
HERMAN KINDERMAN
ARTHUR CLAY

Of an Old 'Un

good fortune, and chiefly owing to the great kindness of numerous friends, to fish most of the Test from Wherwell Priory to Broadlands. To my mind there is no trout stream on earth to compare to it. I have fished many other well-known and celebrated waters—Itchen, Coln, Lea and Mimram ; yea ! even the celebrated Panshanger water at its best, and hundreds of other pretty but less desirable fishings ; but I know of nothing that has afforded me the same keen enjoyment that I have derived from that lovely and most peaceful Test valley. It is not only the fishing. Nay ! there are thousands of other things beyond the mere landing of the perfect great trout, although the capture of each one of these is a triumph that goes far to make up the intense joy of life that comes to one there on a fine May or June day. Look at that exquisite sheet of flowers, bog-beans ; pick one and examine it closely. Could aught be more lovely than its delicate pink pencillings ? Where else can you find such a perfect carpet as a border to your “brimming river” ? Yonder is the pretty water “Avens.” You don’t find that little flower everywhere, nor the two “skullcaps” which are both here, and in yonder hedge as you go down towards Mottisfont Abbey are several patches of the gracefully drooping “Solomon’s Seal.” Now look up above you in the clear blue sky. Do

Sporting Recollections

you see that tiny speck of a bird rising up, up, up with such ease, and then falling like a bolt towards earth, only to rise again and yet again and go through the same graceful downward flight? Listen! You will notice there is not a sound in the air when he is rising, but as he hurls himself earthward there comes faintly to our ears a sound of gentle drumming—bleating they call it—which is made by the two outside tail feathers as they vibrate like the wings of a hawk-moth, in his descent.

By and by as we wander home in the gloaming, how sweet to listen to the witching churr of the poor nightjar as he sits on the oak bough, or to his weird shriek as he flits across the open glade, or to see the dim grey form of the barn owl as he hunts across the meadows, and to hear his cousins of the woodlands as they give forth their melodious and weird serenade from among the beeches. Verily to those who love Nature and her endless voices could anything be more soothing than such sounds and such sights as the summer night comes peacefully on?

I believe I could write volumes of a sort as to the almost endless fishing I have had in Hampshire streams alone. But I find that with the exception of the writings of those who, beyond being experts with the rod, are still greater and more skilful wielders of the pen there is a woful

Of an Old 'Un

sameness. How could it be otherwise in merely recording the ordinary capture of ordinary fish in ordinary streams? I have striven in the feeble words I have written to avoid the well-beaten path of the dry-fly purist and the wet-fly expert among trout fishers, although during a very great portion of my life I have, so to speak, sat at their feet and endeavoured to emulate their successes of skill and cunning. I shall therefore say but little as to ordinary fly-fishing for trout either wet or dry, feeling that the subject has been already handled so frequently and so skilfully by hands that both with rod and pen are far better than my own. I therefore purpose, as far as in me lies, only to write about angling episodes that appear to me to vary somewhat from ordinary river-side incidents.

I have occasionally read in sporting periodicals of trout being caught on the Test with wet fly. I have never known it done. Of the Test above Wherwell I know nothing. Below that part of the river I ought to know a good deal. I can vividly recall a most worthy if somewhat ancient gentleman who one season about 1890 became a member of the old Houghton Club, and who fished steadily through the whole of it with a wet fly and down-stream and never rose a fish.

One day at Chilbolton, when it was blowing

Sporting Recollections

a gale from the west and raining in torrents, any other method of fishing being impossible, I fished the whole day with a wet fly and never rose one single fish, and I know my fly must have passed over hundreds. I never saw so much as a bulge in the water. In the Itchen, on the contrary, I have caught many trout with wet fly. Five-and-twenty years ago a good big Wickham's Fancy fished wet in hatch-holes and rough water was by no means an unattractive lure.

Seated one day—no, not “at the organ,” although indeed I was very shortly to be made “weary and ill at ease”—in a certain smoking-room in Hampshire with old “South West,” to us entered our host, one “Ballygunge,” with a newspaper in his hand. He was indeed in a wax. We were all of us members of the old Houghton Club, then in existence.

“Listen, you fellows,” he said, “and take it over from this letter in this silly paper that you don’t know quite so much about dry-fly fishing as you fancy.” He then read aloud the letter in question. It expressed an infinite amount of pity for the poor dry-fly man, who, so it stated, when removed to waters other than his own beloved chalk streams, was lost, dead, buried, and unable to catch a single fish, because, poor soul, he didn’t know where to cast for them ; was indeed helpless unless, as in his own sacred

Of an Old 'Un

waters, the trout displayed their whereabouts by their "splashing about," to use the words of the letter.

"Ballygunge" snorted with indignation at the idea of the tiny dimple made on the stream by the rise of a Test trout being referred to as "splashing about." Then he turned to me and said, as he waved the paper, "Now, my boy, out of this room you don't go and not one shot this day do you fire until you have sat down at that desk and written in your very strongest publishable language an answer to the silly ass that wrote that letter."

Now it was the 3rd September, a lovely day, and birds were very plentiful. You may therefore be sure that the reply did not take long, and that the aforesaid "silly ass" caught it. In due course he admitted that the "splashing about" was the thing that was not, and that the words had been used at random.

These things bring to memory a somewhat peculiar day spent on one of the very best stretches of the old Test, during which the "splashing about" was conspicuous by its absence. It was a week or two before Mayfly time that my host (not "Ballygunge" this time) said to me one fine morning: "Look here, old chap, will you, like a good man, give up your own fishing to-morrow and look after

Sporting Recollections

old General Blowhard, who is coming along and is most frightfully keen to catch a Test trout?"

"Hasn't he ever caught one?"

"Never! But he's blessed willing," was the reply.

I couldn't help ejaculating "O Lord!"

"You don't seem to think much of the job," said my host.

"My dear man, I shall be only too delighted to do my level best to get the gallant gentleman stuck in a fish, and honestly it will be nothing but a pleasure. I know all about the old cock, but I have never heard that he could fish. Look here! I'll bet you ten sovereigns to one that he doesn't catch a thirteen-inch trout." And answer was there none.

Next morning, sure enough, the old General came along and was given over into the hands of the tormentor. He produced the tackle with which he proposed to fish. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, that would be the very slightest use to a god-fearing Test trout, while his landing-net was constructed to fit over the top of his hat, which was white straw. O ye gods and little fishes! Test fishes! A white hat that you could see about a quarter of a mile off to let you all know that the gallant General Blowhard was on the war-path, and a landing-

Of an Old 'Un

net possibly just capable of landing a half-pounder. Rather to his dismay, the General's kit was left in the keeper's lodge, and I rigged him up with suitable appliances. But nothing would induce him to discard his beastly straw hat, and he scoffed at the very idea of its making any difference to the fish. Not yet was General Blowhard acquainted with the manners and customs of Test trout. A fair sprinkle of blue duns were sailing down the stream, but as my friend "Detached Badger" was fishing some five miles higher up the stream, I did not trouble to ascertain their sexes.

I soon spotted a good fish rising steadily some thirty yards above us close in under our bank. "There you are, sir," said I to the old General, and pointed with the landing-net handle to the fish, who was sucking down some ten flies a minute. Do you imagine I could get that dear, good old man to see that fish rising? Not one bit of it! So much for "splashing about," and let me assure those who are not accustomed to look for rising fish on a Hampshire chalk stream, that the angler unaccustomed to the work may easily pass a score of rising trout on a breezy day without seeing or hearing a single one of them.

We got to within twenty yards of our fish, not ours yet, though, by many lengths. I dare

Sporting Recollections

not go any closer, for old Blowhard totally refused to go down on his knees. I have noticed frequently that kneeling is a position that these military swells don't greatly hanker after. (All right, Sir Evelyn! All right! This is not to your address.) Well, I was almost in despair. At length the old cock said he would go up above the fish and chuck down to him. O Lord! "My dear sir," I replied, "Test trout won't stand that little game." However, he insisted, and walked up not six feet from the bank. Need I say that a big wave went across the stream and a bonny three-pounder disappeared into the depths.

After a time the poor old boy got a little cross—I don't wonder—and said he thought he should get on better alone. Honestly, the attempt to get that poor old man stuck in a Test trout was on a par with the making a small boy translate an intricate passage of Euripides before ever he had learned the Greek alphabet. So I left the old General to his own devices, and as I departed I saw him in the distance standing upright on the very edge of the river, clad in a long black waterproof coat and casting steadily down-stream.

Two or three hours later I approached him again with a view to lunch in the fishing hut. As I drew near I became aware from the swish

Of an Old 'Un

of his line that his cast was gone. "You've lost your cast, General," I called out. "Do you take me for a d——d fool?" was the morsel of embroidery that came back in reply. I made no answer to that, but thought a good deal. The cast, however, was gone sure enough. "Never did such a thing before in my life. Who would have believed it?" etc., etc., etc.

Poor old General! It evidently wasn't "his day out." He made a most excellent lunch though, and was so full of beans afterwards that he offered to punt across the river two of the ladies of our party who wanted some flowers that grew on the other side. They started. I winked at our host, but we said never a word. Now there was at the time a stiff breeze across the stream from our side. The river was swift and broad, and the punt was cumbersome and very high out of the water. *Facilis* was the *descensus* of Avernus. In other words, very soon did the favouring gale waft the water party to their haven on the other side, although truly it was fifty yards lower down. Then the ladies walked away. I winked at our host again and this time gave him one in the ribs, and meanwhile across the stream the band was beginning to play. Wait a minute, for I think of something.

One day a few years ago some of us fishermen

Sporting Recollections

were looking out of a window of a hostel on the Namsen fjord, when to us entered a bearded Viking coming down the street in a most fearful and abnormal state of intoxication. The road was nothing like broad enough for this warrior. Aquavit is heady stuff ! Anon he fell prone ; but after a time arose to a sitting posture and gazed about him. Then evidently a brilliant idea struck him, for he—not without difficulty —got on to all-fours and crawled to an adjacent wall. Against this he most craftily reared himself up, and having got his balance—more or less —proceeded to roll himself along and against the wall, and so progressing, disappeared round the corner.

It was very much in the same manner that the General went down the limpid Test in that punt. He manfully pushed her out from the bank and poled her into the stream, but the instant she felt this, together with a head wind, round she came and into the bank again thirty yards lower down. So it befell again and again and again, until the poor dear old General finally gave it up in despair and sat him down on the same side from which he had started nearly half a mile higher up. Oh that I could have heard even a few of the remarks ! He and the punt were duly retrieved by other and abler arms. It isn't given to the uninitiated to pole a

Of an Old 'Un

clumsy punt across a rapid stream in a gale of wind.

I should have liked to have heard his candid opinion of Test fishing that evening. But now comes the very cream of the cream, the Holy of Holies of the affair. A few weeks afterwards appeared in one of the sporting periodicals a letter from the General, and signed with his pen name. Well, aye, too well indeed did we all know it. His article was on the subject of Test fishing. He went into detail at some length, and ended up by telling us that his best season on the Test was *eighty brace of trout*. And not a month previously had that old liar assured me he had never caught a Test trout in his life. I believed that ! Verily I say unto you : "The fisher goeth forth in the morning, he returneth in the evening, the smell of whisky is upon him, but the truth is not in him." For these words, O Andrew Lang, much thanks, and may you be resting in peace after your strenuous life by the side of gently flowing streams in flowery glades and fanned by sweetest zephyrs.

Some wise person has remarked that there are better fish in the sea than ever came out of it. That is very probably true. If there are better fish in the river Test than have ever reposed on its banks under the well-satisfied gaze of the admiring and successful angler, they must indeed

Sporting Recollections

be good ones. I know of trout up to a very heavy weight indeed ; of one over sixteen pounds, caught with—may we be forgiven !—a piece of fat bacon, and another cannibal of eleven pounds, caught by a cousin of mine with a shrimp, in the same pool out of which the sixteen-pounder came. I do not see why there should not be trout there up to almost any weight within reason. Many a forty-pound salmon has been landed from less alluring quarters. Verily, that same lovely pool below Romsey Bridge is one of the most exquisite pieces of water, from a fisherman's point of view, that I have ever looked upon. What hours have I spent on the bridge on sunny mornings, when the chestnuts have been in full bloom, and all around was a scene of the most perfect rural peace, watching the trout sailing about in the eddies beneath me, and turning aside for a moment now and then to approach the wheel, ever revolving in the little side stream to prevent their peregrinations into the town, bent, I fear, on garbage hunting. In spite of the wheel, do we not know that there are many finny visitors that haunt the carriers along the streets of Romney, who force their way up these suburban waters which have fed the frequent mills in passing ? Do we not know how they are on occasions ladled out in the purlieus of Romsey—aye ! and Winchester too

Of an Old 'Un

—by hook or by crook, mostly the latter implement, I fancy, and sold for much to unsuspecting purchasers.

Enchanting as it is to sit on Romsey Bridge and drink in all the surrounding loveliness of scene and sound as one watches the trout below in the crystal clear pool, I never felt the very smallest desire to catch any one of them, and it is not of these fat fellows, big as they undoubtedly are, that I would sing. Nay, rather, but of those that lie in the limpid waters higher up the valley, where, as we wander along the banks, we can but faintly catch the sound of the old abbey bells in the far, far distance.

The biggest, far the biggest, fish ever caught with a fly in a sporting manner that I know anything about is that taken comparatively lately by my friend Major Bartholomew with a sedge at Kimbridge, the weight, as I am told, being eight and a half pounds. "South West," that trustworthy chronicler, says it was a perfect fish. To catch a fish of that size with a sedge on an ordinary Test cast is a most wonderful feat. I know that, as well as skill, which Major Bartholomew possesses to the fullest extent, he must also have had luck on his side, and I am quite certain he will pardon my saying so. In a river like the Test at Kimbridge one cannot dictate to a large fish. If he insists on burying himself

Sporting Recollections

in a mass of weeds in deep water, the fisher is done for, fish he never so craftily. If his foe insists on taking his line round an adjacent stump—yes ! there *are* a few stumps in the Test —through a hatchway, or among the piles of a bridge, who are we, with our necessarily slender cast, to say him nay ? There only remains to wind up the line and to make a few remarks according to our several temperaments and upbringing. But there are occasions when our sorrow—I speak for myself !—is almost too deep for words. I once, how well I remember it ! but no ! I will not, for it was a salmon, and does not concern us here. But—ah me ! It *was* a salmon ! I thought I should have cried.

I have never caught a really “severe big trout” in the Test. I have got plenty of just about four pounds, but very few indeed of over that weight. Four pounds ten ounces is my biggest. I do not think there are many trout of five pounds or over fairly caught with fly. I well remember Tom Mann—I sigh as I think how many years ago—getting one of just over $5\frac{1}{2}$ lb. on Mayfly on the Compton Water. He sent a message down to us at Kimbridge, where I was fishing with “Ballygunge,” to tell us about it. Just about the same time Mann had laid out on the table at the Horsebridge Inn the best day’s catch of Test trout I ever saw for size and

THE ANGLOR

LANDING A BIG ONE ON THE TEE AT KIMBERIDGE

BALYNGE



Of an Old 'Un

condition. There were eight fish weighing twenty-five pounds and not one of the lot was under three pounds. At one time I knew of quite half a dozen trout on the Compton Water that weighed six pounds each or over. It was all very well to know them, to have a casual acquaintance with them, so to speak, but the consummation so greatly to be desired was much more than this. It was to have them "out of it" by legitimate means and on the hook of a steelyard. I never accomplished it, alas!

One or two of the Compton monsters, however, had narrow escapes. One of them I had on, and apparently well hooked, three times during three consecutive Mayfly seasons. He beat and broke me every time. The third occasion I did really think he was mine, for he was on for several minutes, and his gymnastics were assuming quite docile and ladylike proportions when our sad parting supervened. He lived and had his dwelling in the depths of Oakley Hole, a very large and deep hole capable of holding a seine-ful of salmon, to say nothing of trout. I do not think this big fellow ever surface-fed except on Mayfly, and then always in the same place in the neck of the run in the pool. The first two times I hooked him he went down into the deep water and broke me at once. The third time he rushed up-stream and jumped clean out of the

Sporting Recollections

water, showing his goodly proportions and perfect condition. My heart was in my mouth, but we weathered that storm, and he sailed away up-stream and fooled about not too uproariously. But after a bit he turned round, and came right away down and into the depths of Oakley Hole. In those depths he remained, and played about at his wild will for some time without damage, and then saw fit to come out again and go away up-stream close to the other bank. I could not get to him, as the water was over my head. He got faster and faster, and, with the stream against the long line he had out, the end came.

About half a mile lower down the river one day I became aware of an enormous trout taking down every Mayfly that came over him. I had not previously heard of or seen this fish, and never heard of or saw him again. He was a veritable giant. He was feeding at the head of a narrow channel that skirted a bed of weeds in the middle of the main stream. The wind was blowing steadily straight down the river. I managed with the utmost difficulty, without swimming, for the water was deep, and the bed of the river full of somewhat treacherous holes, to attain to a spot from which I could have put a fly over him neatly and without a drag if only the wind would have eased off for a very few seconds. There I stood patiently waiting, and

Of an Old 'Un

none too warm after a time, for the water was well above my hips. I waited and waited, but never for one moment did the wind cease, and never did that lordly trout fail to absorb every Mayfly that came over him. It was very trying, and my patience was not rewarded, for, although I remained for over two hours planted there in the middle of the river, the wind never let me have one moment when I could have put a fly over him in such a manner that it would have been acceptable.

I knew of two hoary-headed old fellows who, when Mayfly had been on for a few days, could be seen up a certain rush-grown ditch that joined the main river patrolling about, and round and round—for all the world like an old farmyard cat looking for mice in the gloaming—sucking down every fly they could find. I am sure both of them were well over six pounds.

There were, indeed, more than a few very goodly trout in the depths of the main river appertaining to that most lovely place Mottisfont Abbey, in the days when that best of good fellows the late Daniel Meinertzhangen lived there. He was, indeed, always most kind to me, and many a trout have I pulled out of the Mottisfont fishing, and many a pheasant have I missed in the coverts there when staying under his most hospitable roof. "Meinertz," as he

Sporting Recollections

liked to be called by his friends, was one of the few men I have seen who, having taken to shooting late in life, approached, *proxime accessit*, to quite the front rank of shots. As a dry-fly fisherman he was nearly as good as the very best. I remember a most beautiful brace of absolutely perfect trout of $4\frac{1}{2}$ lb. and 4 lb. he caught one evening opposite the summer-house on the main stream at Mottisfont.

In under a willow, and in a perfectly inaccessible place, lay for nearly the whole of one season, just below the boundary of the Mottisfont water, and close to the road which runs from the adjacent station, an enormous trout. I put him at not an ounce less than eight pounds. I had stood and watched him with longing eyes times without number. So had a great many other people, and I could not describe them all as gentlemen and sportsmen. I knew of two trout at that time of over eight pounds apiece that had been taken out—with bread which was their accustomed diet—weighed and put back again. My old friend at Mottisfont Bridge was quite as large as either of them. One of them lived at Wherwell Mill, and was called Jumbo, and the other in Mr. Silva's kitchen garden (I do not mean in the cabbage beds themselves, but in the river which irrigated them), just below Fullerton station, and were well known to fame.

Of an Old 'Un

The old trout under the willow disappeared. One morn I missed him from his accustomed place—I hope the writer of the Elegy will, from his present dread abode, allow the misquotation to pass—and never saw a sign or heard a word of him again. Probably his end was ignominious, and not unconnected with a fishmonger's slab.

I knew of a six- or seven- pounder that lived in a large, deep pool near the top of the Houghton Water. I had seen him plainly on a few occasions, but had never known him take a fly. Mayfly did not exist in that part of the river. One day in April there was—a very rare event now-a-days—a most abnormal rise of grannom, and I thought it not improbable that it might tempt this fish to forsake his usual habits. It did. I sought his pool, and saw him at once at the tail of it sucking down the flies by dozens. He very shortly picked out mine, and was hooked. He gave one mad rush up-stream, out of the pool, and beyond it, and the end came. Half my cast and the artificial grannom, green egg and all, left me. I expect that old trout came to the conclusion that taking flies was, after all, an undesirable method of filling his stomach. I never saw him again.

I know of another fish of over six pounds not far off, but he reposes in a glass case in the dining-room of the old Stockbridge Club in

Sporting Recollections

the Grosvenor Hotel, and was caught with a minnow.

Near the top of the Houghton Water, on Machine Barn Shallow, I once had a good round with a trout—not a monster, but a very good fish, for he, too, was just under four pounds. I had had him on some time, and was thinking it was about time to get the net ready, when he went right across to the other side of the shallow, thirty yards away, and buried himself in a great lump of dead weeds that had collected, and there remained immovable. I could do nothing at all with him, and for all I could feel he might have been a dead whale. I thought I would have just one last try before breaking the line, so I solemnly waded across to the other bank—it was nowhere more than four feet deep—put down the rod, took the line in my hand, and cannily felt my way along it, into and through the weeds, until I touched the fish. He was perfectly still, and seemed to think my touching him was some legitimate part of the entertainment. By decrees I worked the net through the weeds, which were very thick, till I had got it under him, and then with my fingers I fairly jockeyed him into it, and hauled him out, together with about half a stone weight of dripping weeds.

Round about the regions of Wherwell and
302

Of an Old 'Un

Chilbolton there used to be some monsters of trout. I have had a very few of them on the end of my line, but never a one on the bank. I remember stalking a very large fish on Chilbolton Common that I could hear sucking down Mayflies on the edge of some reeds. I crawled in the shallow water through the reeds inch by inch, until I was within very few feet of him, and could see him plainly. He was, indeed, a big one, and his tail, which came out of the water as he took each fly, looked like the flat of a spade. I made a retreat, and with infinite trouble got through the reeds again, some yards below him, and even then could only see the outside edge of the rings he made in rising, and I had to throw round the corner of some reeds and chance it. I sent my fly forth on its errand, and thought it had fallen accurately. It had. I heard a suck, struck, and was into him. He simply bolted off up-stream like a steam-engine, and when he had run most of my line off the reel took his departure to Whitchurch, or anywhere else up the river, for all I knew or cared. I should like to have had that fellow on a double-hooked Jock Scott at the end of a grilse cast, in which case the result might have been different. As it was, I might just as well have tried to hold Leviathan himself.

Sporting Recollections

I once, near the same place, met my friend, the late Canon Awdry, who thus addressed me : " If you care to risk being drowned I can put you on to three good fish that I don't believe have ever had an artificial fly over them since they were hatched. Come along." He took me off to a bend in the river, where it was very broad. Half-way across was a patch of rushes. Close in, under the opposite bank, were three fish, some half-dozen yards apart, taking down duns with the regularity of clockwork as they floated along. Now, if only I could attain to that patch of rushes I could put a fly to all those three fish neatly and easily, for the wind was perfect, and there was scarcely a breath of it. But between us and that rush patch the water looked deep, and the mud in that part of the Test was not to be despised. I may add that the opposite bank under which those three fish were enjoying such an excellent repast was adorned all along with may-bushes in full bloom, and it was absolutely certain that no artificial fly could by any possibility have been presented to them from that side. If I was unsuccessful in getting a fly to them from the rush patch, it should not be from want of trying. I never used waders in those days for any fishing, and by the same token was never one halfpenny the worse, not even when salmon-

Of an Old 'Un

fishing in February. So I simply took off everything above my trousers, and in I went. I reached the patch of rushes all right, but there was not much to spare, for the mud was up to my knees, and the water was nearly into my mouth. But I could quite nicely put a fly to those three fish—fish do I say ? I mean lambs, lambs with fleece—like Mary's—as white as snow, as far as sucking in an artificial olive dun went, but black as the devil himself was ever painted in their subsequent behaviour. I put my dun to trout No. 1, the lowest. He took it like the aforesaid lamb, and bolted off down stream in precisely the same way that his namesake, of chasing fame, used occasionally to bolt about the year 1870, and broke me. No. 2, ditto ditto. No. 3, exactly the same. Thank you ! I had had three muddy, watery journeys between the shore and the patch of rushes, had lost three flies, and a certain amount of cast, and was “a demd, damp, moist, unpleasant body.”

CHAPTER X

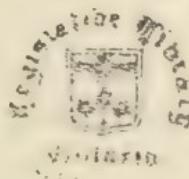
The Oykel—Most peculiar river I ever fished—Paved with salmon and grilse, but they won't take—Fish at the falls when river was in spate, in other days caught with landing-nets only and taken away in cartloads—A slice of luck in the Holyhead express—Fishing in South Africa—Hand-lines, rods, and other methods—Also a little dynamite—The Knysna—Netting at night in the Lora mouth—A very narrow shave from drowning—Keeping up the dignity of Government once again—Shooting an ibis from bed!—Well! very nearly.

IN all my experience of salmon-fishing I don't think I ever knew a river with such remarkable peculiarities as the Oykel in Sutherlandshire. I fished it with S—M every day during May, June and July in the year 1902. Our water was from the Falls to the tideway at Inveroykel, and a most charming piece of fishing it was. Some of the pools looked quite perfect, but, alas! they turned out otherwise so far as the catching of salmon was concerned. I have never in the whole of my somewhat long angling career seen a river packed with grilse and salmon, but chiefly grilse, in that July, as was the Oykel. In many places the bed of the river was paved with fish. But they were *non-takers*. Not one in a thousand paid any more attention to one's

Sporting Recollections

fly than did the stones behind which they were lying. I have gone out in the morning and fished from the Falls to the Einig very many times without getting a single rise, well knowing that my fly was passing over grilse in hundreds and over salmon in dozens.

The last day of our term the river was in perfect order and the weather all that could be desired, and the fish were there in thousands. We met between us only one salmon and one grilse. That was all, and our flies must have been over fish without number. A little way below the Falls was a rock overhanging the river some twenty to thirty feet high. If in the morning when the sun was out, at about nine o'clock, you crawled to the edge of this rock and cannily looked over when the river was full of fish, you would see the most wonderful collection of grilse with a few salmon among them that I have ever beheld in my life. Not even in Norway during the many seasons that I have fished there have I seen anything like it. I have often lain on that rock and watched S—M's silver doctor or Jock Scott traverse that pool from side to side and from top to bottom. The fish never moved a fin, never even wagged their tails, didn't even go away, simply lay there jostling each other. Then came a big spate, and I sat at the side of the Falls watching the



Sporting Recollections

fish fighting their way up in *thousands*. It was a most entrancing spectacle, but disappointing withal, for one could but think and regret that such exceedingly meagre toll had been taken from the vast multitudes of fishes that were eluding us for ever.

Old John, our ghillie, who had spent his life in Strathoykel, assured us that in olden days, when the laws as to the taking of salmon were far less drastic than at present, a couple of men at the Falls with landing-nets when a spate came on used to catch salmon in cartloads. I believe it to the uttermost, and if he had said wagon-loads instead of cartloads I should not cast the slightest doubt on his statement.

As we all know well, there is a tremendous lot of luck attached to salmon-fishing. How is this for a full-sized slice? I had been fishing the Kilbarry water on that most glorious river the Blackwater, with my old friend poor George Pyne, for many weeks. We were wending our way to England viâ Holyhead. Somehow or other I had managed to get no dinner, and when I got on board our boat at Kingstown I was about half starved. There was nothing to eat but a most excellent ham. I ate about half of it. Soon after we left Holyhead I felt very thirsty. When we rattled through Crewe I could scarcely speak, and as the lights of Rugby

Of an Old 'Un

flashed by I thought I was not far from death. My throat was like the proverbial deserted parrot cage, and I could only just manage a husky whisper to my mate that I really thought I should die of thirst before ever we reached Euston.

"Oh, are you thirsty, sir?" asked a very friendly voice in angelic accents from the other end of the compartment. "I've got a bottle of 'the boy' in my bag and a glass, up in the rack there. You are more than welcome."

Do you imagine I blessed that good man? Man do I call him? nay, rather an angel of light! He opened his bag, he unwired the bottle, and handed it over. My endless blessings fall upon his head, and if in the course of nature he is now in a better world, may a phalanx of houris be supplying his every want, and the Royal Artillery string band be soothing his slumbers.

A change of scene is refreshing. Fly with me, then, across the waves to the shores of the Indian Ocean west of the Cape of Good Hope, where I have had much fishing of very varied descriptions; where I have stood on a rock high above the waves, and after whirling my big bait attached to a stone round and round my head, have sent it forth into the deep to catch—well! just so, perchance an eight-foot shark, a fifty-

Sporting Recollections

pound red steenbrass, kabeljauw, or poeskop, or whatever a kind providence might send ; where in the estuaries, with a bamboo and more slender appliances, I have caught in the tideway much more acceptable and palatable fish. Hauling out monsters on cart-ropes never had much more attraction for me than catching enormous sharks at Pernambuco from the stern of an ocean-going steamer, with a hawser for line and Lord knows how many pounds of pork for a bait.

About 350 miles east of Capetown is a lovely little sleepy hollow of a place called Knysna. The village lies at the head of a five-mile-long lagoon which enters the sea between two magnificent headlands : on one side a towering perpendicular rock many hundred feet high, and on the other a very steep heather-clad precipice. In and around that most exquisite lagoon I have shot and fished days and nights without end : the fishing chiefly with an enormous seine which required some twenty of us to manœuvre. The hauls were stupendous on occasions when we happened to get a great many fish cornered in a bay. The variety of fish we took was wonderful, but, as I can only recall the Dutch names of them, a list would be uninteresting. I remember, however, that two sorts of mullet and two at least of sea-bream predominated.

Of an Old 'Un

Every fish we caught was thankfully accepted by adjacent inhabitants.

We once, and only once, I am thankful to say, enclosed an eight- or nine-foot shark. As we neared land his rushes at the net were fearful. I thought it must give way, but it held manfully, and of course gave to the brute's attacks. As we got into knee-deep water we took uncommonly good care to keep the calves of our legs a long way from the net, for he would have had a bite out of a man's leg if he'd got the chance as easily as a reaping-machine takes off a hare's. We eventually got the devil into quite shallow water, and with the aid of a lump or two of driftwood hammered his life out.

There was a certain point in the Knysna lagoon where the water was very deep, and here big fish used to congregate, and occasionally we made a party to spend the night and picnic for fishing. We made an enormous fire of driftwood, and had coffee and sandwiches going all night, and when so inclined went to sleep on the sand. One night I was awakened by one George Rex shouting for help in an exceedingly vigorous manner. I ought to observe that we all went to sleep with our lines fixed round our wrists. I was wide awake in a moment, and saw George leaning back and pulling like blazes

Sporting Recollections

at his line, but nevertheless being slowly towed towards the water. I rushed at him, seized him round the waist and leant back with all my might. That was too much for the brute, for of course we knew it must be a shark. We had a tremendous game of pulley-hauley, but at length tired him out and towed him ashore. He was a whopper, between eight and nine feet long.

I remember yet one more adventure with a shark, remarkable not only from a natural history point of view, but also from the peculiar antics the beast played when hooked. It wasn't a big one, not more than six feet long. Far away east up the coast in the wilds of Kafirland is a certain little rocky island, of about half an acre, which one can get to at very low spring-tides. On the outside the water is very deep. When we lived in Kafirland we used occasionally to spend a day and night on that island. It was glorious ! And the number and variety of the fish we caught was scarcely "creditable" (as I once heard a gamekeeper remark). I was seated on a rock by the side of one of my sons, who was fishing with a long line and a big bait. He got a bite. He struck. A strike under such circumstances is a somewhat different affair from the twitch you give with your wrist when you see a trout suck in your little dun, and is

Of an Old 'Un

made by a pull that calls into use every muscle in your body. The next thing we knew was that a shark sprang right out of the water at our feet, and was kicking about on the rock we stood on. We were on top of him like lightning and had him killed in a moment. Before casting him back into the deep we proceeded to remove his liver to get the oil. We then ascertained that he—or should I not under the circumstances say *she*?—over and above the liver and sundry other appurtenances contained eleven little sharklets. These we placed in an adjacent little rocky pool where they swam about and appeared quite happy. And now I hope no one is going to be rude enough to say anything about Baron Münchhausen !

When our African home some thirty years ago was in the Transkei, we had, by way of a seaside residence, a row of some half-dozen Kafir huts made of wattle and daub, which were fairly weather-proof. In these we used to reside for a month or so at a time, when official affairs were not too pressing, and an intensely happy time was invariably the result. A more absolutely free and unfettered life could not be imagined. Indeed, when my two sons and I were there, with merely a native policeman or two to cook for us, it not infrequently happened that, with the exception of tennis-shoes,

Sporting Recollections

we did not put on a stitch of clothing from morning till night, and became almost as black as the surrounding Kafirs. Whether the fat old Dutch fool, who was Secretary for Native Affairs at the time, and thought himself the deuce and all of a swell, would have considered that this manner of life was "keeping up the dignity of the Government," this present historian knows not nor indeed cares. Our row of huts was situated on a little flat at the bottom of a kloof close to the seashore. The forest came down to our very doorways, for we had no doors or windows to our huts, and it was quite charming to see the perfectly natural way in which our good and trustworthy policemen used to walk in and out at sunrise with our coffee while my wife and I lay peacefully in bed, neither they nor we being so silly as to give one thought to the matter.

Oh, but it was a glorious life and did one good. The unfettered freedom of those sons of Ham, with my wife and me at any rate, was perfectly delightful. One of our policemen came to me one day and said that one of his wives—his latest and best—was very sick. Would I of my mercy come and see if I could do anything for her? Of course I went with him, and on entering her hut there lay the girl on a blanket, as naked as the day she was born.

Of an Old 'Un

My Lord ! I scarcely knew which way to look. Anyhow I found out what was the matter and cured her. I verily believe whenever I met that girl afterwards I went very near to a blush. Not she, indeed, but she always had a radiant smile for me. The poor folk came to me times without end for help in their obstetric cases ; but under the circumstances this I felt compelled to refuse.

Within very few feet of our bedroom hut a little rill tinkled by among the rocks, and at night as we lay in bed the sounds of the forest that came to us were endless. The animal life of that wooded kloof was wonderful—bush-bucks we could hear barking every night, cats, ichneumons, porcupines, monkeys, otters and many other strange beasties. Most of their cries I knew, but there was one animal that beat me, for I heard him every night over and over again—I could never get to see him. By day in the bush and on the edge of it were endless “strange bright birds on their starry wings” : touracos, hornbills ; three sorts of cuckoos, with most brilliant golden and green plumage ; the golden oriole, with his exquisite liquid whistle ; and brilliant sun-birds on every aloe. Flowers without end after rain—gladioli and watsonia of almost every hue, bright sky-blue convolvuli in masses ; and on the seashore, almost to high-

Sporting Recollections

tide mark, mesembryanthemums of varied hues flowering in the utmost profusion.

But the trail of the serpent was over it all, for there were lots of snakes, which frequently visited us in our huts. If they were innocuous they were allowed to depart in peace, but if otherwise their heads got bruised according to prophecy, which was as it should be. There were lots of Berg adders (*Clotho atropos*) whose bite spells death when away from instant help. We killed numbers of those beasts both by day and night. It is quite wonderful, however, how soon one gets to ignore snakes altogether, and even forgets that they exist. One day, while we were all sitting at breakfast, a big beast of a snake, quite seven feet long, sailed calmly into the hut as though it belonged to him. As he possessed no poison apparatus he was allowed to go out again and on his way.

About a mile away from our little encampment both east and west two moderate-sized rivers made their way into the sea. That on the west was named the Qora, that on the east the Jujura. To those unacquainted with the Kafir tongue and its peculiarities, the attempt to pronounce these names correctly would probably produce dental fracture. The mouths of both these rivers were our happy fishing-grounds, as will appear. We swam, battling with the surf,

Of an Old 'Un

we fished, we netted, we gathered oysters and were happy from daylight to dark, naked and unashamed.

At the Qora mouth was the most magnificent oyster-bed I ever saw or read of. It was exposed at low tide, and one had nothing to do but send a man along with a sack and a pickaxe to procure a daily supply. They were incomparably the best oysters I ever ate, and were, moreover, fully four times as big as the largest natives. Never make two bites of a cherry ! There were many of those Qora oysters that "Muckle Mou'd Meg" herself could never have negotiated in less. Many and many a score of those excellent oysters have I eaten fresh from the native bed by just stooping and prising them open, for we had the necessary implements concealed close by.

One morning soon after daybreak I was awakened suddenly as I lay in bed in our hut by the cry of a "Hadadah" (*Ibis hagedash*) a large and shy bird, close by. I was out of bed in an instant, seized a gun, and in less than ten seconds the bird was dead. They are excellent eating. Then from an adjacent hut appeared one of my sons, gun in hand, with his trousers on (his mother and her English maid were with us at the time) : "Dear old man," I called to him, "in this wicked world never wait to pull your

Sporting Recollections

breeches on. If you do you'll usually find yourself second."

The tide ran up the Qora for a couple of miles and formed a miniature lagoon in which were innumerable fish. I had a good seine a hundred yards long which *could* be worked by four men, but we usually had six or eight, for I always had a few native police with me. It was a perfectly lovely spot. The very densest forest came right down to the water's edge on both sides of the lagoon from which echoed wild cries of birds and beasts, and in the sunshine there were dashing about among the foliage the most lovely butterflies, while the everlasting roar of the ocean close by never ceased from soothing our ears. That same dear ocean, combined with our netting therein, very nearly put an abrupt termination to my career one fine morning, but of that a little later.

When we started our netting operations we very soon ascertained that netting in daylight, or even by moonlight, in the Qora lagoon was useless, for the fish always evaded the net or jumped over it. It was a beautiful but most unsatisfactory sight to see the mullet of from half a pound up to five pounds weight flashing over the net in the bright moonlight in shoals, and leaving not a solitary fish behind entangled in its meshes,

Of an Old 'Un

Towards the lower end of the lagoon was a bay, and at the shelving edge of this we finished our haul. Of course we got to know the depth of the water and the channels most accurately, and generally carried out our plans without a hitch. Picture to yourself in the darkness the little procession of six or eight men sallying forth, four of them carrying the seine on its poles. When we reach the river, so dark is it we can only just distinguish the tops of the forest trees against the sky. What innumerable sounds of the night greet our ears—the hooting of owls the cry of the nightjar and calls of animals without end, and weird noises in the air made by big flying insects, noises that so loud and far-carrying are they that were we to show you the wee beastie that makes it you would laugh us to scorn. It is, indeed, a weird, entrancing scene to us who are used to it, and who know the depth of the water at every step. But I have noticed that the new chum, just fresh from home, doesn't seem to enjoy it quite so thoroughly, more particularly when he puts his foot on a torpedo fish or electric ray.

Then we strip and wade along up the river near the opposite bank, the water being up to our hips, for a quarter of a mile or so. Then two or three of us swim over to the near bank, with one end of the net, into shallow water

Sporting Recollections

again, leaving a deeper channel between us across which the seine stretches. Then slowly we drag right down the water to where we started from, and out on to the sand where we empty the bag of the net. A good haul will give us two or three hundredweight of fish, or even a little more at times. The best of these are mullet of two kinds, called "springers" and "harders." I have little doubt they are really *Mugil chelo* and *Mugil capito*. Then there were always sea-bream of two or three kinds, and very occasionally two or three very dark-coloured fish called "gallune," of three or four pounds weight, which were most excellent eating. Sometimes we found a beastly great poescop, weighing half a hundredweight or more, in the net—to our disgust—for they are perfectly useless for any purpose except, perchance, agriculture. Electric rays were, like the poor, always with us, and when one of us touched one by mistake, or trod on one, much jeering ensued, for they gave a very strong shock, and a big fish would bring one down. I think this beast of a fish was *Torpedo nobiliana*. I could, however, see nothing at all noble about it. There was another ray, called by the Dutch *Zandkruiper*, which was, without doubt, a skate. These came up the river in shoals, and we had great fun chasing and spearing them with assegais. On one occa-

Of an Old 'Un

sion we surrounded a shoal with the seine, and were totally unable to get the net to shore. There must have been many tons weight in the net, and as we didn't want the fish, nor indeed to break the net, we let them all out.

At the very mouth of the Qora river, where it joined the surf, was a little somewhat deep bay, which I fancied would be pretty full of fish. I thought one morning I could manœuvre one end of the seine between this bay and the river, and that then all together we could drag through the bay and out on to the shore. Thank God ! I tried alone, for the very swiftly flowing river caught me and carried me out into the surf. The surf on that coast is no joke, and I had a terrible time of it, diving under the waves and fighting their combers. But, after a time, I got away from the stream and fought my way towards shore, which I reached more dead than alive. It was a somewhat peculiar sensation, when I was battling against that raging surf, to see my wife sitting on the hillside sketching, and my boys on the shore watching for my head among the breakers, and to know that the betting was ten to one against my ever getting back to them. However, as old Anthony Trollope said in *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, "It's dogged as does it." I believe it was "dogged as did it" that journey. I have had

Sporting Recollections

several shaves of being drowned in my life, but that round with the surf at Qora river mouth was assuredly the closest call of all.

There was yet one other method of fishing that we utilized at the mouth of the other river called Jujura. That method was with dynamite, and I am yet once again unashamed. The fun of it was simply gorgeous. Listen ! and I think you will agree with me. At a bend in this river, about a quarter of a mile from the sea-shore, was a pool about twenty-five feet deep. My two sons and I were the performers, for we never had any one else with us sufficiently at home in the water to take a hand in the game. Being stripped and ready for the fray, we lit a fuse attached to a good big blasting charge of dynamite, and chucked it into the depths of that pool. As soon as ever we heard the explosion, in we dived ; and the fun that ensued in the next five minutes was, in a small way, as good as I have ever had in my life—rat-catching isn't a patch on it. Of course, a good many fish were killed outright ; they lay prone on the bottom, and were easily retrieved at our leisure ; but quite a score or two were half stunned and could swim, but their mode of progression was without form and void. The chasing, grasping, and holding these half-silly fish, and taking them to the surface was, I

Of an Old 'Un

think, while it lasted, quite as good fun as I have ever had of a piscatorial nature. I should dearly like to have it all over again ; but, alas ! of this one fact I am exceedingly well assured : and that is, that with the present measure of my waistcoat, and consequent buoyancy of my frame in five-and-twenty feet of water, nothing less than half a hundredweight of lead would ever get me to the bottom.

CHAPTER XI

Hawking—Ananias and Sapphira as falconers and churchgoers ;
also they sing hymns unmelodiously, very—Chasing a wood-
cock with a peregrine—Partridge-hawking—Rook-hawking
—Rabbit-hawking with a goshawk—Marvellous art in the
training of hawks—Good-bye !

THERE was a time in my career as a sportsman when a great deal of hawking was interpolated amongst the shooting. Usually at a place in one of the eastern counties, where a large party of us were in the habit of staying on a very good and rather big partridge shoot that was never more than half shot over, at least two days a week were devoted to hawking. This plan was carried on, season after season. On the days that hawking was the order of the day, there was no shooting at all for any one. If they didn't care to go out hawking, the sportsmen could stop at home and bite their finger-nails, read third-class magazines, or even play patience. Now usually among our party there were two who honestly liked hawking—our host and one other. There were two more who *said* they liked it ; but their names, although they were both men, spelt Ananias and Sapphira. These two also, as I noticed on Sundays, said they liked going

Sporting Recollections

to church, but their looks bewrayed them. I never saw two men look so frightfully bored in my life as they did during the performance, or so joyous when it was all over. Also, they both sang the hymns full blast, and at the same time most terribly out of tune. The rest of us hated hawking like poison, especially as it took us away from the most excellent partridge-driving. I don't think we ever attempted to conceal our dislike. To us it was waste of time that might have been more profitably spent in the pursuit of partridges, only with guns and drivers instead of falconers, peregrines and a cadge. Yes, I do believe I am aware what a cadge is, but I don't think I know much beyond that.

Now, peace, you Geordie Lodge ! you Gerald Lascelles ! and you others ! I am not going to worry you with any lengthy dissertation on hawking. I couldn't if I tried, for I know absolutely nothing about it. But I wish to say a few words on the subject as it appears to an ordinary—a very ordinary—sportsman who was not brought up to the art, for art it undoubtedly is, and very high art, too.

In all probability the partridge-hawking I have witnessed, and I have been out some scores of times, has been of an inferior description. I imagine the country was not nearly as open as it should have been. But I will grant at once that

Sporting Recollections

the successful flight of a falcon or tiercel (is that right?) when he or she flashes out of the far blue vault of heaven like lightning and strikes the quarry, is a sight for the gods, and is perfectly glorious. But as to the endless abortive waiting about, "the restless unsatisfied longing," that I have suffered day after day and then plodded my weary way homewards with nothing accomplished, has gone far to make me hate the very sight of a cadge.

I have derived, I think, more pleasure from rook-hawking in Cambridgeshire than from any other kind of hawking. Alas ! I had not a horse, and therefore missed the very best of the chase, which fell to the lot of the falconer alone who had. But I have been greatly amused by the antics of an old buck rook in a hedge in evading the talons of his foe, and by the efforts of the peregrine to circumvent his quarry.

One of the most interesting chases (I don't doubt there is some professional expression for that : sorry I don't know it, so we'll let it go at "chase") I ever saw was at a woodcock. I am delighted to say the "cock" won by many lengths. We were partridge-hawking, and happened to see a woodcock alight in a hedge in the distance. We walked up to the place, put him up, and the tiercel was instantly unhooded and let go. The cock was off like a—— Well !



AN EXCELLENT FALCONER, A FINE SHOT, AND
THE BEST DRY-FLY MAN OF HIS DAY, ON THE TEST

Of an Old 'Un

like a woodcock ; and I know of no faster-flying bird when he means going. He made for a little wood about a mile away. Peregrines can fly a bit too, can't they ? Our tiercel did his best, but he never even turned the cock, who reached his haven in safety fully thirty yards ahead. It was a most beautiful sight, and about the prettiest bit of hawking that I ever saw.

I don't admire goshawking for rabbits at all. That must be my own fault entirely, for I know many better men and many better sportsmen than myself who go into raptures over it. The wretched bunny appears to me to have next to no chance at all, and then, when the poor little brute is squealing in the goshawk's talons, along comes the falconer with his open knife, and over the subsequent rites that ensue we had better draw a veil. I must allow that to the goshawk they appeared to be delightful : to me they were distinctly *beastly*.

To one who has seen peregrines flashing out high over the waves from many a towering cliff of the Hebrides, from the Culver, or the chalky heights near the Needles, it is almost impossible to believe that the hooded, jessed, and belled beauty that sits so peacefully on the falconer's wrist, and will soar away into the sky to " wait on " at his bidding, and return again to the lure when summoned, can be the same bird. There are in

Sporting Recollections

falconry many very wonderful things, but to my mind by far the most marvellous of all is the training of the birds. The amount of knowledge, patience, and acumen required by a man who is to become a successful falconer appears to me to be next door to miraculous. The peregrine, as we all know, is one of the wildest of all birds, and yet the skilful trainer will take a mature bird, caught when fully grown in the course of migration, and called, I believe, "a passage hawk," and by his infinite skill and unwearyed patience will change the, by nature, most exceptionally wild fellow into a tame, well-behaved, and obedient servant. To me the many records, and they are legion, of the training of hawks during centuries in many lands are, indeed, most fascinating literature.

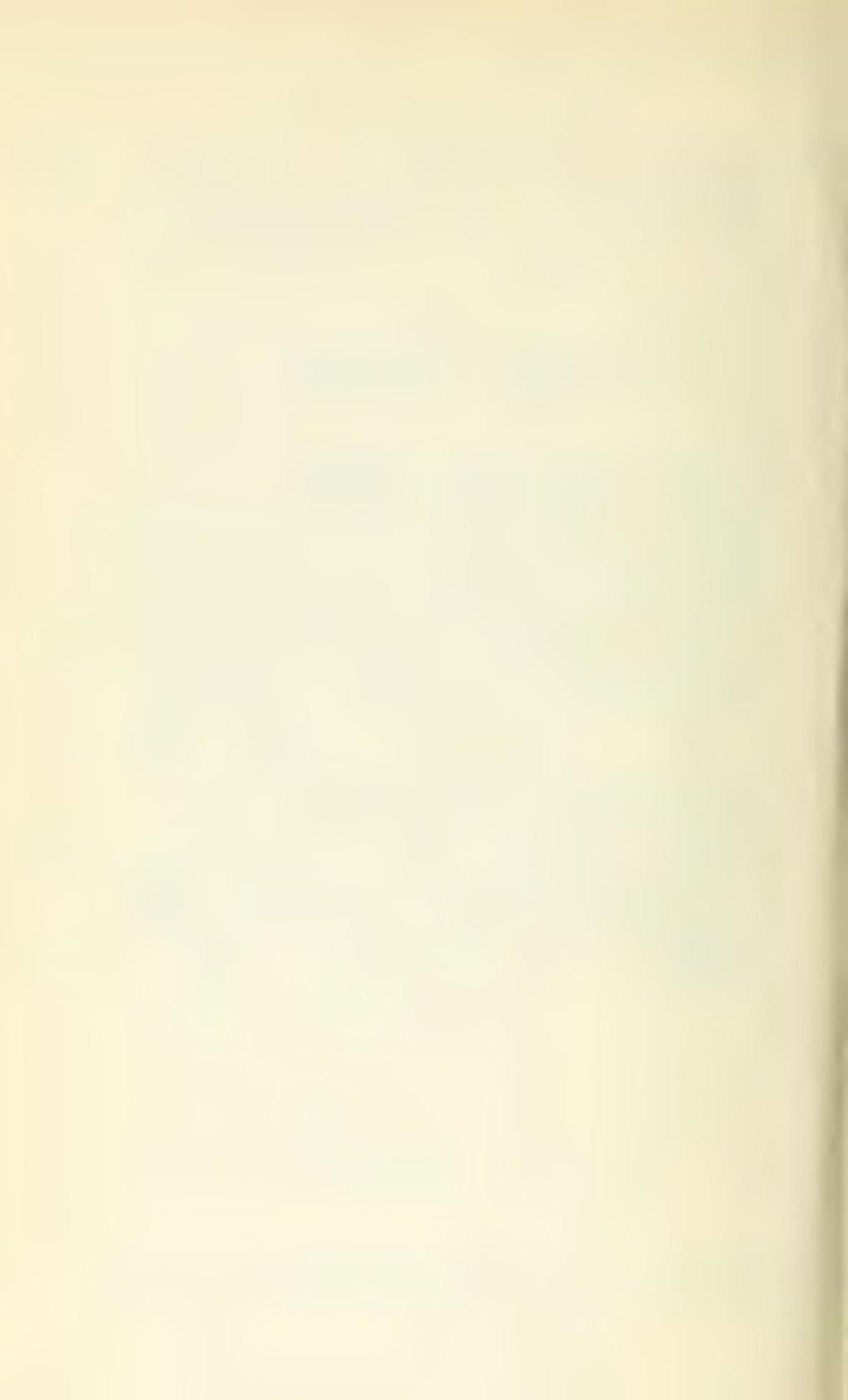
But it is time these records ceased. In bidding my kindly readers farewell once more, I can only trust that my outpourings have not bored them beyond endurance, and that in some, at least, of the opinions I have ventured to express on sporting matters they will feel inclined to agree with me.

MR. EVELEIGH NASH'S LIST OF NEW BOOKS

“MY PAST”

MR. EVELEIGH NASH has acquired the world-rights of a sensational autobiography written by a relative of one of the reigning monarchs of Europe.

The memoirs, which are now in active preparation, will be published under the above title during the London season, but, owing to the terms of his agreement with the personage in question, Mr. Nash is unable to give particulars at present. The identity of the author and full details regarding the book will be announced in April.



ADVENTURES BEYOND THE ZAMBESI

Of the O'Flaherty, the Insular Miss, the Soldier-Man, and the Rebel Woman.

By MRS. FRED MATURIN

(EDITH CECIL-PORCH)

With Illustrations

Price 10s. 6d. net.

Four widely diverse, yet up-to-date people agreed to seek together the risks, excitements, discomforts and delights of sport, adventure and companionship beyond the Zambesi. One of these was Mrs. Fred Maturin (Mrs. Cecil-Porch) whose previous book "Petticoat Pilgrims on Trek" showed that she possesses a rare power of vivid and amusing narrative. Wanderers and stay-at-homes will revel in her lively description of the six months' trip of this delightful quartette in quest of big game and sport in the African wilds. Her buoyant optimism and her rich sense of humour found full play in the many adventures that befel them, and it is just this humorous, friendly and intrepid outlook of hers that lends such charm to her written record. The book is illustrated with some remarkably good photographs.

MR. EVELEIGH NASH'S NEW BOOKS

**SPORTING RECOLLECTIONS OF
AN OLD 'UN**

By FRANK N. STREATFEILD, C.M.G.

(*Author of "Reminiscences of an Old 'Un."*)

Illustrated

Price 7s. 6d. net.

A book after the heart of all good sportsmen, brimming over with cheerfulness and good fellowship. The author, who has been a universally popular figure in sporting circles for over a quarter of a century, relates many amusing anecdotes on shooting of every description, fishing, falconry and cricket, and has packed his book with incidents of interest to all who use the rod and gun.

**THE ROMANCE OF THE
ROTHSCHILDS**

By IGNATIUS BALLA

Illustrated

Price 7s. 6d. net.

A full and picturesque narrative of the rise of the House of Rothschild. The characteristics and early vicissitudes of the famous Five Frankfurters who laid the foundations of the House are shown, and many amusing anecdotes are related of them in Mr. Balla's book.

SOME EARLY PRESS OPINIONS

"The author takes us, in a sense, behind the scenes, gives us a hundred details of the Rothschilds'

MR. EVELEIGH NASH'S NEW BOOKS

methods, and shows us, step by step, how the accumulation of these enormous sums was made possible."—*The Globe*.

"Extremely interesting."—*Daily Express*.

"Interesting all the way through."—*Standard*.

"Abounds in interesting quotations and anecdotes."

—*Liverpool Daily Post*.

THE MARRIED LIFE OF QUEEN VICTORIA

By CLARE JERROLD

Author of "The Early Court of Queen Victoria," etc.

Illustrated.

Price 15s. net.

In this volume Mrs. Jerrold carries a stage further her interesting study of Queen Victoria's life. She endeavours to tell the real truth regarding the Queen's married life and her relations with the Prince Consort, and in doing so relies on their own recorded actions and words rather than upon the highly coloured and in many cases exaggerated pictures presented by the "lives" of Prince Albert which were authorised by the Queen.

The result is a human and fascinating story. The relations of the Queen and Prince with those around them, with their children and with their ministers—especially their hatred and fear of Palmerston—their love for Louis-Philippe, for the German confederation, and their complacency towards Russia are all dealt with and throw a strong new light upon the English Court during the years in which Prince Albert was virtually King.

THE SAILOR WHOM ENGLAND FEARED

Being the Story of Paul Jones, Scotch Naval Adventurer and Admiral in the American and Russian Fleets.

By M. MACDERMOT CRAWFORD.

Author of "The Wife of Lafayette."

Illustrated.

Price 15s. net.

John Paul Jones was unquestionably one of the most striking characters of the eighteenth century. Born in 1747, the son of a gardener in Kirkcudbrightshire, he was, at the age of seventeen, third mate on a slaver, at twenty a merchant captain ; at twenty-eight lieutenant in the United States Revolutionary Navy ; at twenty-nine a captain ; at thirty-two commodore, "the ocean hero of the Old World and the New," spoiled, adulated, petted by great and small. A vice-admiral in the Russian Navy at forty-three—at forty-five he was dead !

A traitor who terrorised his countrymen, known alternately as "rebel," "corsair," and "pirate," Paul Jones was none the less a man of rare distinction and ability—a brilliant seaman endowed with courage and determination ; and the record of his deeds is a story of unflagging interest.

A CANDID HISTORY OF THE JESUITS

By JOSEPH McCABE.

*Author of "The Decay of the Church of Rome,"
"Twelve Years in a Monastery," &c.*

Price 10s. 6d. net.

It is curious, in view of the endless discussion of the Jesuits, that no English writer has ever attempted a systematic history of that body. Probably no religious body ever had so romantic a history as the Jesuits, or inspired such deadly hatred. On the other hand, histories of the famous society are almost always too prejudiced, either for or against, to be reliable. Mr. McCabe, whose striking book "The Decay of the Church of Rome" attracted such widespread and well-merited attention, has attempted, in his new book, to give the facts impartially, and to enable the inquirer to form an intelligent idea of the history and character of the Jesuits from their foundation by Loyola to the present day. Every phase of their remarkable story—including the activity of political Jesuits and their singular behaviour on the foreign missions—is carefully studied, and the record of the Jesuits in England is very fully examined.

MR. EVELEIGH NASH'S NEW BOOKS

A KEEPER OF ROYAL SECRETS

Being the Private and Political Life of Madame de Genlis.

By JEAN HARMAND

Illustrated.

Price 15s. net.

The career of Madame de Genlis is one of the baffling enigmas of history. For the greater part of her life she played an important *role* in the social and political life of France.

By virtue of her intimate association with Philip Egalité, Duc d'Orleans, and her high position as the Governor of Louis Philippe and the other Orleans children, the influence she wielded practically amounted to royal power.

She cast her spell over a wide circle, winning admiration even from her enemies, and yet her life has been the subject of a storm of scandalous reports and speculations.

What was her exact relationship to the Duke? was she the mother of the famous "Pamela" whom Lord Edward Fitzgerald married? what was her share in the astounding affair of "Maria Stella"? what part did she play in the Revolution?—these are some of the mysteries surrounding her on which M. Harmand, with the help of many unpublished letters and documents, throws much new light.

The whole truth will probably never be known, but M. Harmand in his elaborate biography gives us an immensely fascinating and vivid story, and unearths many new details regarding her curious and romantic life.

MR. EVELEIGH NASH'S NEW BOOKS

THE TRUTH ABOUT WOMEN

By C. GASQUOINE HARTLEY

(Mrs. WALTER M. GALLICHAN)

Price 6s.

This book is the outcome of twelve years' careful study of the conditions of women in this country and abroad. Believing that the time has now arrived when women must speak out, fearlessly, the truth about their own sex, the author has endeavoured to review the situation as it appears to her after her lengthy study of the subject. Her book is divided into three parts—the biological consideration of the question—the historical consideration, and the present day aspects of the woman problem. It is a book of much plain speaking and closely reasoned argument and, whether or not one agrees with its conclusions and directness, it is a work which undoubtedly merits the attention of every responsible person, male and female.

MR. EVELEIGH NASH'S NEW BOOKS

BY-PATHS IN COLLECTING

By VIRGINIA ROBIE.

Profusely illustrated.

Price 7*s.* 6*d.* net.

Every enthusiast over rare and unique things which have passed the century-old mark will want this delightful book by Virginia Robie. It contains a wealth of sound advice upon the quest of the quaint, and much reliable information is given upon the collecting of such things as china, furniture, pewter, copper, brass, samplers, and sundials.

PRINTS AND THEIR MAKERS

Essays on Engravers and Etchers Old and Modern

Edited by FITZROY CARRINGTON

With 200 Illustrations.

Price 10*s.* 6*d.* net.

A volume exquisite in every detail of the planning and making. The chapters—contributed by notable authorities—discuss various phases of etching and engraving from the time of Raphael and Durer to the close of the nineteenth century. The plates for the illustrations (200) have all been made with unusual care from original engravings and etchings, and together form a valuable collection.

New Six-Shilling Novels.

VEILED WOMEN

By MARMADUKE PICKTHALL

Author of "Saïd the Fisherman," "Children of the Nile," etc.

A fine novel of the East telling the life story of an English girl who marries an Egyptian noble and lives the harem life. The gradual mental and physical effect of the secluded life of the harem upon a healthy western woman is shown with great effect, while the story of her ineffectual appeal to the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army of Occupation to take her back, of her escape from the harem and flight into the desert, of her return and eventual relapse into a state of resigned contentment with her lot, will appeal strongly to every woman. The wonderful world of the Cairene women, their comings and goings, their intrigues, their pleasures and pastimes, the gorgeous colouring and the subtle perfume of their surroundings, the mystery, the charm and the insidious influence of the harem life are depicted with the brilliance of characterisation and richness of detail that one has come to expect from the author of "Saïd the Fisherman."

LADY OF THE NIGHT

By BENJAMIN SWIFT

A charming story centreing round the romantic attachment of two delightful people—Ysmyn Veltry, the daughter of a wealthy French perfume manufacturer and Vivian Darsay, a great-grandson of an old Crimean veteran, Colonel Darsay—whom, years before the story opens, chance had brought together and made playmates of among the perfumed fields of roses, jasmine and all the other fragrant flowers which surrounded Veltry's world-renowned distillery at Grasse.

At the instigation of an ambitious sister-in-law, Veltry has come to London to inaugurate, on lines which shall outvie in magnificence any similar establishment, a shop in which to sell his perfumes. Ysmyn and Vivian meet again under dramatic and greatly changed conditions to find their path to happiness beset with difficulties, and it is not until the "Maison Merveille," which has quickly become the talk of fashionable London and developed into a veritable "palace of beauty culture" is, in the height of its success, overtaken by disaster, that the "Lady of the Night"—so called after jasmine, her father's favourite flower—becomes the wife of her erstwhile playmate.

THE EMPEROR'S SPY

By HECTOR FLEISCHMANN

"The Emperor's Spy," which deals with the struggle between Napoleon Bonaparte's secret police, headed by a beautiful woman spy—Elvire—and a gang of daring Royalist conspirators led by Georges Cadoudal and the Chevalier Lahaye Saint Hilare, is one of the most exciting, vivid and elaborate historical novels since Dumas's "Three Musketeers."

Famous historical characters, from Napoleon downwards, crowd its pages. Incident follows incident in quick succession, and plot is met by counter-plot, until, at last, under the shadow of the wild cliffs of Brittany the Emperor's Spy, having achieved the crowning triumph of her life, meets with a swift and tragic death at the hands of the last of the Royalists. The book is 576 pages long and there is not one page of this tremendous story which does not glow with living, human interest.

GLOOMY FANNY AND OTHER STORIES

By MORLEY ROBERTS

Author of "Thorpe's Way," "David Bran," etc.

Readers of Mr. Morley Roberts's novel "Thorpe's Way" will remember that "Gloomy Fanny," otherwise the Hon. Edwin Fanshawe, was one of the most amusing characters in that very amusing story.

MR. EVELEIGH NASH'S NEW BOOKS

I'D VENTURE ALL FOR THEE

By J. S. FLETCHER

Author of "The Town of Crooked Ways," "The Fine Air of Morning," etc.

A story of the Yorkshire coast, 1745.

THE LOST MILLION

By WILLIAM LE QUEUX

Author of "The Mystery of Nine," "Without Trace," etc., etc.

CARNACKI
THE GHOST-FINDER

By WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON

Author of "The Night Land," "The Boats of Glen Carig," etc.

A NEW NOVEL

By LADY TROWBRIDGE

MR. EVELEIGH NASH'S NEW BOOKS

A HAREM ROMANCE

By E. DE LA VILLENEUVE

A very lifelike picture of the Young Turk Revolution is contained in this novel. A double love story, full of thrilling incidents, is woven into the web of public events, the two heroines, one a lovely Turkish girl, the other a beautiful Armenian, having each been prisoners in the Palace of Yildiz. The personality of Abdul Hamid is vividly realised, and the cruel oppression to which he subjected the inmates of his harem is graphically described.

Three-and-Sixpence Net Novels.

POISON

By ALICE AND CLAUDE ASKEW

Authors of "The Shulamite," "The Woman Deborah," etc.

ROADS OF DESTINY

By O. HENRY

Author of "Cabbages and Kings," "Heart of the West," etc.

MR. EVELEIGH NASH'S NEW BOOKS

Two-Shilling Net Novels.

QUEEN SHEBA'S RING

By H. RIDER HAGGARD

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," etc.

THE MYSTERY OF NINE

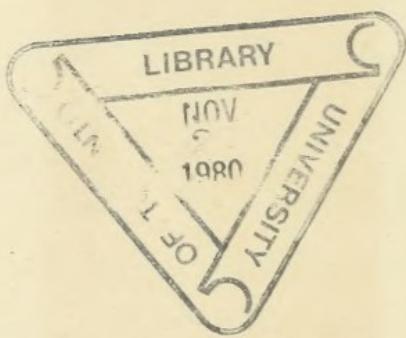
By WILLIAM LE QUEUX

Author of "Without Trace," etc., etc.

SETH OF THE CROSS

By ALPHONSE COURLANDER

Author of "Mightier than the Sword."



**PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET**

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

BRIEF

GU

0004736

UTL AT DOWNSVIEW



D	RANGE	BAY	SHLF	POS	ITEM	C
3911	06	22	11	021	3	